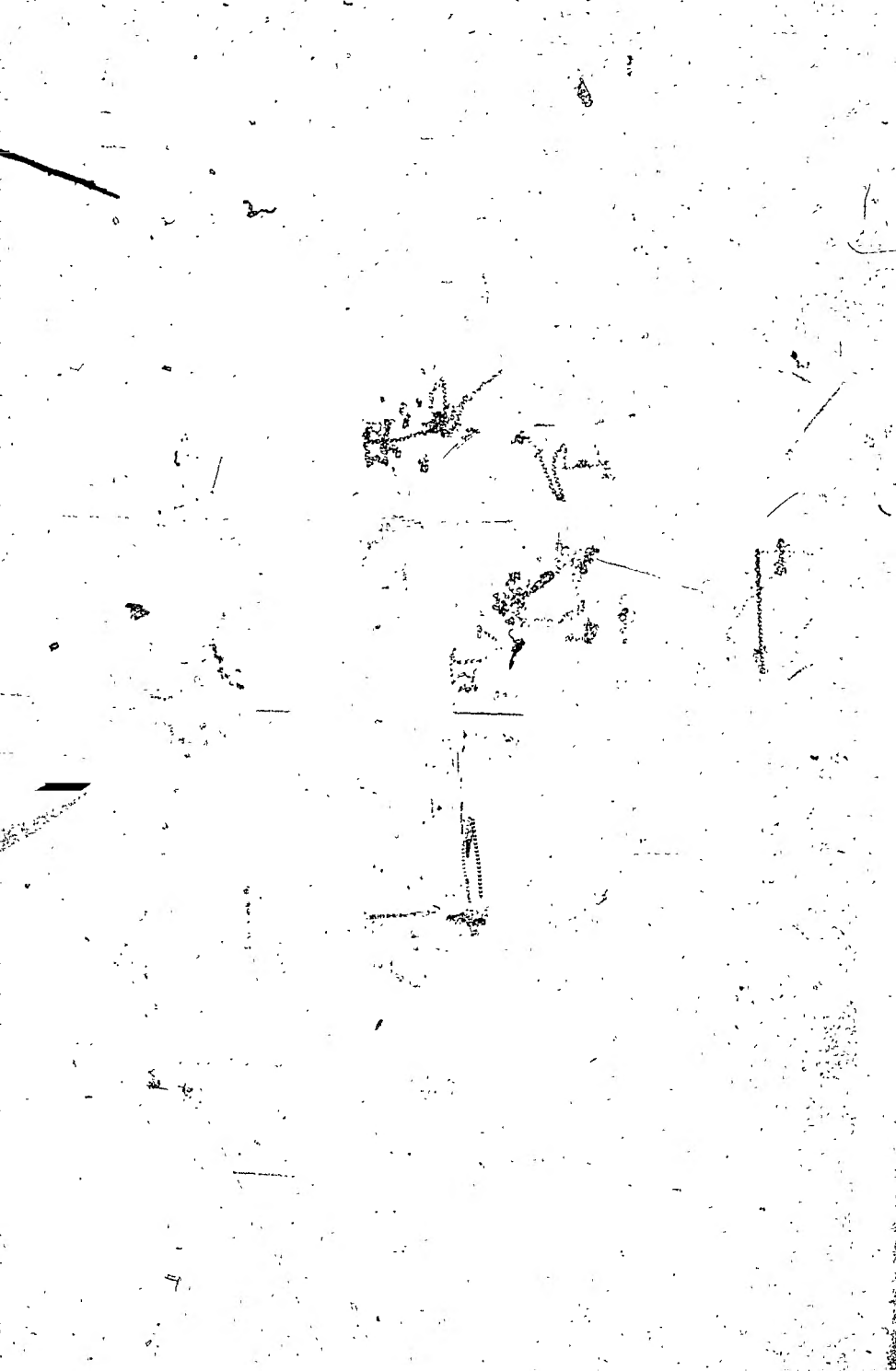


THE DANCE
OF THE
BUFFALO SKULL
AND OTHER POEMS

WYOMING
UNIVERSITY PRESS

THE DANCE
IN THE BUFFALO SKULL



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THE DANCE
IN THE
BUFFALO SKULL
AND OTHER POEMS

By
W. CLARK SANDERCOCK

S. J. REGINALD SAUNDERS
84-86 WELLINGTON STREET WEST
TORONTO

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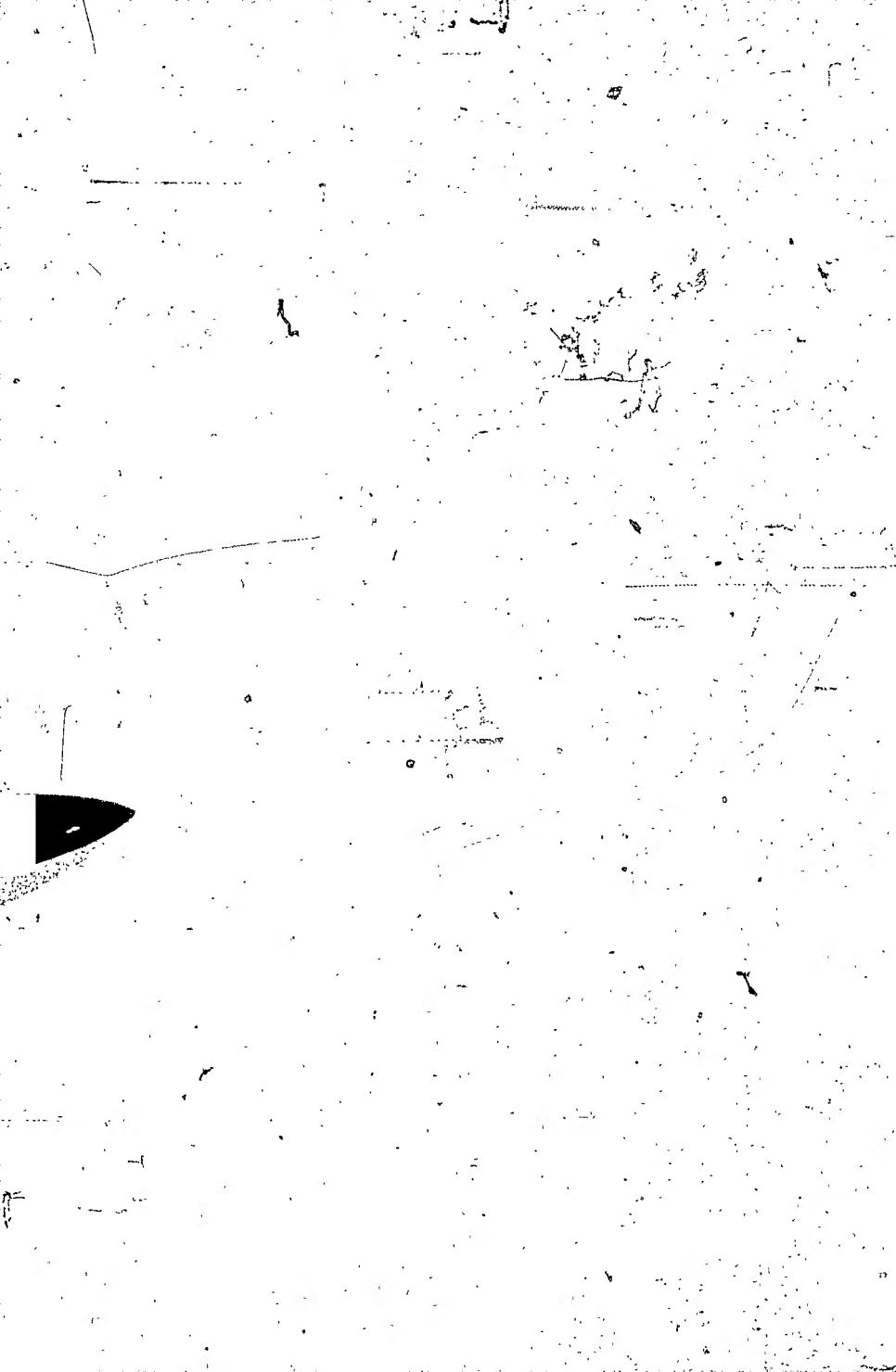
First Edition, November, 1935.

PRINTED IN CANADA
T. H. BEST PRINTING CO., LIMITED
TORONTO, ONT.



DEDICATION

*I'll build a shrine to Friendship
Where Love may tarry long,
And bring to it in thankfulness
A ritual of song;
Then from the spangled poplars,
And from the darksome pine,
I'll call my pilgrim friends
to come
And linger in my shrine.*



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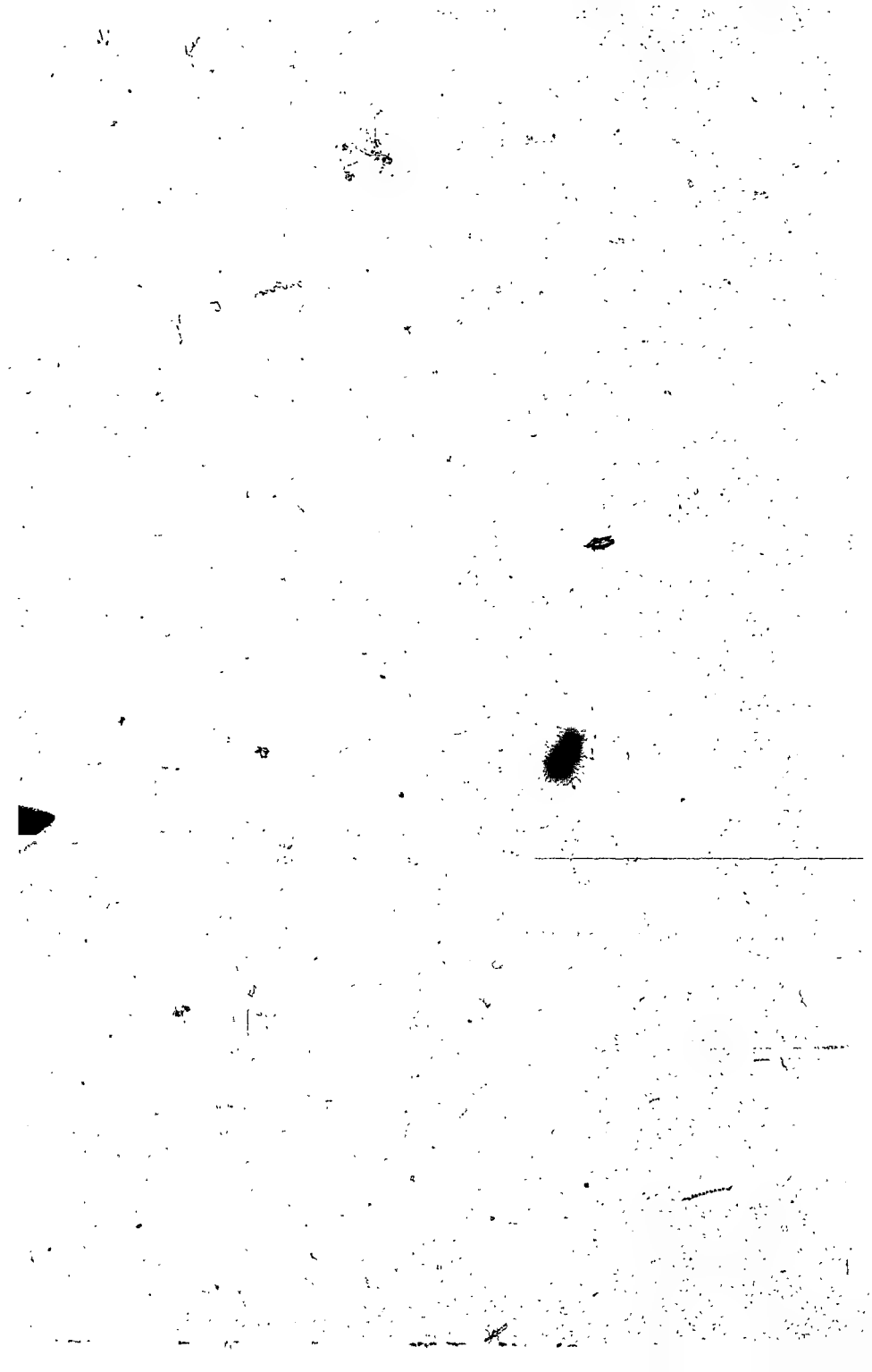
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INTRODUCTION

Eleven times in sixteen years Saskatchewan won the highest honours for the best wheat grown in the world. "If that ain't glory enough for one place it's a pity, that's all," as the Clockmaker said. But the glory of the central Prairie province is not only confined to the production of wheat. Her poets also do her honour and this volume will do much to increase her prestige in the field of Canadian literature.

W. Clark Sandercock was born in Londesboro, Ontario. In 1880 he came west with his parents, the last ninety miles of the journey being made in an ox-cart. He graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1909 and took up teaching as a profession. At one time he spent two months as a volunteer botanist with a geological survey party in the Pre-Cambrian area of British Columbia.

Mr. Sandercock is well acquainted with the early forts of Western Canada, and the archives treasure his history on the subject which appeared in the *Canadian Geographical Journal*. His hobbies are Natural Science, Canadian History and Poetry.

That Mr. Sandercock has captured the spirit of the Canadian West is apparent to readers of "The Northern Light", and "The Dance in the Buffalo Skull" could scarcely have been written by one who was not familiar, from boyhood, with the wild life of the Prairie.

The late Mr. Austin Bothwell, whose flair for the recognition of the genuine and significant in literature will long be remembered, predicted a high place for Mr. Sandercock among Canadian poets. This introduction is a tribute to the memory of Mr. Bothwell in the belief that his faith will be justified.

JESSIE ROBSON BOTHWELL.

Legislative Library,
Regina,
November, 1935.

THE DANCE
IN THE BUFFALO SKULL



THE TITAN'S REVENGE

Though not the source of the inspiration for the poem, the closing stanzas of *Childe Harold*, Canto IV, Sec. 179-183, may be taken as a summary of the thought. The Titanic was sunk in the Atlantic in collision with an iceberg, on her maiden voyage, April, 1912.

POSEIDON, King of the Ancient Sea, in his palace
of sea-hewn caves,
Awoke from an age-long troubled dream and
summoned his trusty slaves:

"I dreamed," said he, "that a milk-white rock to a
towering strength had grown;

That it sent forth thunders above the sea with a fury
that shook my throne;

That its lightnings flashed from shore to shore beneath
the watery plain:

Go swift into every sea, and bring report of my wide
domain."

Swift each grey-beard vassal sped to harness his dolphin
team,

Sharper sped than the steeds he drove by Neptune's
ireful gleam.

Found them asleep in the pastures deep where the great
sea-lions whelp;

Lashed them fast to their crimson keels with thongs of
the waving kelp;

Then far over the heaving sea, leagues upon leagues
away,

The pitiless guides, they scored their sides with the lash
of the stinging ray.

Calm the sunny Pacific lies as they skirt its myriad
isles;

Clear in the glass of each ringed lagoon the stately palm-
tree smiles.

Only the keel of the frail canoe by dusky warriors
manned

Slips athwart the gleaming beach, where their naked
children stand;

Nothing in life but man and wife, sire and son and
chief,

And the great world ends where the great sea bends at
the edge of the murmuring reef.

Idle the tale, and of no avail, of the isles of the naked
men—

Thus the scouts to each other told, nor dared to return
again.

So, what meant the dark portent, seeking, they scat-
tered wide,

East and west and north and south, cleaving the rolling
tide,

Searching the realm of their tyrant lord unto its utmost
bound,

To the rocks and sands on the rim of the lands that
girdle the ocean round.

Some they follow the icy front where the penguins
stand arow,

But the Southern Cross in the silence reigns as a myriad
years ago;

Some they sail to the spicy isles where the swart-skinned
divers plunge,

To reap on the floor of the fertile sea their harvest of
pearl and sponge;

And some they sail with the spouting whale where the
North Star shines alone,

But nought was here to awake the fear of the King on
the Coral Throne.

Scouts of the Sea, no fear may be in the land of the
Midnight Sun.

Turn your prows to the south again, for your quest is
but begun.

Look! What means that trailing cloud on the far hori-
zon's verge?—

Westward set—to the sunset's gate? After it! Ply the
scourge!

Lay the lash on their writhing backs! Verily ye have
need,

For it sinks from sight in the sunset's light in scorn of
your dolphin breed.

Vain, in vain is the urge and strain. Back to the South
return,

But bear in your hearts a haunting dread of the thing
ye could not learn.

Follow down where the high peaks frown fearless of
Neptune's ire,

As into the high o'er-arching sky they pour perpetual
fire;

Down through the breathless stagnant-seas asleep under
Capricorn,

Till your courage quakes where the storm-fiend shakes
the cliffs of the roaring Horn.

Northward now on the seas they plow, stars in the sky
agleam.

Straight they stand with their beards afloat in the lash-
ing wind abeam.

Mystery lurks on the long dark shore, but they leave it
far astern,

As through the maze of islanded ways vainly they veer
and turn;

Then over the grave of a long-lost world where the sea
in requiem rolls

And moans the tale of the dying wail of a hundred
million souls.

Gates of Hercules open wide, gates of the Inland Sea,
Gates whose hundred terrors hold an hundred lands in
fee.

Ah, but that was in days of yore! Whose is the terror
now?

Scouts of Poseidon, answer, ye who halt with scowl-
ing brow.

What of the monsters hundred-eyed that pour their
dark breath forth

As they come and go through the gates of Woe on the
trail to the far, far North?

Lights! Lights on the frowning heights! Have the
stars come down to earth?

No gods more dread than Poseidon! Ye must enter the
fateful firth.

Somewhere there ye may bring the lair of the monsters
dire to view,

For well ye know or ever ye go that the dream of the
King is true.

Turn not back from the thing ye lack, nor bring him a
tale to mock,

For the trail will lead where the monsters breed in the
caves of a milk-white rock.

Lights! Lights on a thousand heights! Has Night
resigned her sway?

Poseidon's halls are hidden in gloom—here reigns per-
petual day.

Lights aglow in a glittering row round every harbor
bend,

And far and high to the spangled sky in serried ranks
ascend.

Lights on billowy Tiber; lights on the reedy Nile
Their splendors flaunt on the lilled haunt of the slum-
bering crocodile.

The dawn mounts up the morning—the lights on the
hillside fade,

But a thousand towers and tenements in its radiance
stand arrayed.

Behold, ye sons of the mighty Sea, the might of the
sons of men,

Who pay no more as in days of yore the homage they
paid you then.

Will your dolphins pass the fretful shore? Can ye
match the fatal odds?

Yet mortal helm o'er-rides your realm in the freedom
of demigods.

The sires whose o'er-due craft ye tossed long since in
wanton sport,

Look how their sons pass scatheless now from port to
utmost port.

Look how, obedient to the rein, they drive, the broad
seas o'er,

The captive monsters, hundred-eyed, and chain them to
the shore.

There meek they stand against the land, nor shall your
whim decree

What hour their lord shall speak the word what turns
them back to sea.

Go, follow them far a-seeking wherever the path may
lead,

For ye cannot rest till ye find the nest where the fire-
lunged monsters breed.

Go, scout through the-blue Aegean, thro' the glittering
Cyclades;

Go through the gate where Troy once kept the dicta-
torial keys;

Go there where the ships of Tyre at Piraeus come to
dock,

But all in vain, for ye shall not gain to the foot of the
milk-white rock.

The baffled scouth have turned their backs on the Sea
between the Lands,

On Hellas' rugged peninsulas and the bright Trinacrian sands.

Straight for the gate where the sun went down they
speed with a hunting fear,

As out of the night a myriad lights are glittering far
and near;

And the wailing shrieks of the monsters dread their
timorous ears assail

As they shrink away through the frowning gate and
steer for the Northern Trail.

All night the lash of the western gale the sea into spin-
drift whips;

All night the shadows of lofty shores the rising stars
eclipse.

Dawn creeps over the dreary waste obscured in a shroud
of grey,

But the panting dragons of smoke and flame plough
down the boisterous Bay.

They cleave the crests of the tumbling waves and shriek
in a passing hail,

And wake a dread of the terror ahead at the end of
the Northern Trail.

The leaden clouds on the waters rest as they enter the
Narrow Seas,

But the night and the mist are quick with the stir of
a myriad prodigies:

Flashing towers that stab the dark with a beam like
Jove's own glance;

Rocks that bellow and reefs that clang with lugubrious
dissonance;

Deep reverberate wails that shiver the terror-bewildered
air—

And a surety grows that the trail has led to the long-
sought dragons' lair.

The timorous scouts abide the dark in the lee of a
whispering bar,

And through the mangling mist they glimpse the glow
of the morning star.

They watch the gathering light of dawn. A clamor
above them wakes.

The sun flings open the doors of day. The withering
night-wrack breaks.

And there, behold, with crevice and crag where the
screaming sea-birds flock,

All gleaming bright in the morning light the cliffs of
the milk-white rock.

Now round the isles of the lambent cliffs the scouts
pursue their quest,

And every cave by river and wave where the dragon
brood infest

Far off they view from the safe retreat of the open
harbor's mouth,

The storm-beat bays of the west and north, the tides
of the east and south.

Then back they turn with the tale complete their mission to vindicate,
Nor pause until, in the Coral Seas, they come to the palace gate.

II

O the pilot fish to his lord the shark, and the shark to the Emperor brought

The word that the scouts were there without and the royal audience sought.

He gave command, and the vassal band at the Monarch's feet down fell,

And the Monarch read in each look of dread the story they had to tell.

Presaging ill, the court stood still, for the henchmen lay as dead,

And wind and wave forgot to rave, but never a word they said.

Darkness grew on the Monarch's brow as he glared on his courtiers dumb:

And a moaning along the sea-beach ran in token of wrath to come.

"Idle scum of the river's mouth, what is the thing ye rue?"

"We cannot tell," they stammered all, "O King, for the dream is true."

And the thundering roar along the shore was the might of the Monarch's boom:

"Speak! Utter the thing that daunt's ye, or I utter a fearful doom!"

"O Monarch dread, thy slaves are we. How shall we
tell the tale
Of mighty seas once thine to rule where other kings
prevail?
Of monsters dire that feed on fire, that yet obey the
rein,
And fearless ride through storm and tide throughout
thy wide domain;
That take their toll of every land, that know not night
nor day,
And send their speech from each to each a thousand
leagues away?"

Poseidon clutched at his flowing beard. "What idle
tale is this?"

(And the surf seethed over the sunken reefs with a
menacing serpent's hiss.)

"No idle tale, dread Lord, we tell, nor could we the
half declare

Of the beasts that teem on sea and stream and furrow
them everywhere.

No isle, no port, no river-mouth but boasts its dragon-
flock,

But chief indeed is the brood that breed in the caves
of the milk-white rock.

"O there we saw their mighty smiths, we saw their
forges glow.

Their skill and cunning surely none but gods immortal
know.

With hammers never silent, and with fires that never sleep,

We saw them fashion upon the land their dragons of the deep.

Into the waves the monsters plunged, they churned the sea to foam,

Their masters bore to every shore, and came in safety home.

"Low on the tide by the milk-white rock in the dead of the night we lay,

And the glare of a hundred thousand lights turned darkness into day.

We saw the bones of a monster rise, more mighty than all his kin,

And moon by moon from night to noon his builders clother him in.

Then high above the billows' reach to mock the Titans' fame

Along his side they blazoned wide the unspeakable Titans' name."

Now flushed the Monarch's cheek, his frame grew tense in every limb.

His haughty scowl was dark and foul, his eye set stern and grim.

"Out on your story of dragons dread whelped in a seaside den!

I know them well by the tale ye tell for the works of the sons of men.

Do they dream in pride that the gods have died? Do
they think to take their place?

And think ye now that the gods must bow in homage
to their mad race?

"Know ye not, or have ye forgot, that withersoe'er
they went

In days of yore, by sail or oar, 'twas only by my con-
sent?

Do they with fire today conspire to compass my full
defeat?

Though they harness the sun and moon in chains, mad
were the proud conceit.

Quick! Speed me North! Go, bring report of the way
their dragon takes,

And learn how vain is the pride of men when the God
of the Sea wakes."

III

The Northern Lights are flashing where the stars in
circles swing,

Rich and grand at the high command of the Polar
Winter's King.

Spanning the dark azure there hangs a shimmering arch
aglow,

And the light-beams dance and shoot and glance as
through it they come and go;

And curtains flutter and swing and sway in a great
celestial breeze;

To do delight to the pride and might of the Monarch
of all the Seas.

Into the dark and the silence stark the King and his
minions ride,

And the vassals now for the royal prow the grinding
floes divide.

Over the verge their steeds they urge to the Frost King's
crystal cave,

And the King steps down and doffs his crown to the
Monarch of Wind and Wave.

Icicles hang in his hoary beard, and his words come
hoarse and slow,

As he homage pays to his lord and prays full humbly
his will to know,

"I come to seek in your kingdom bleak the tribute that
is my due,

No sifted snow or drifting floe, the task of a moon or
two.

Bring me here the mightiest berg that in all thy realm
is found.

Broad and deep and high and steep, with crag and
pinnacle crowned.

Clear as the sea its cliffs must be, dark as the deep its
tint,

And its sunken ledge as keen as the edge of my tropical
reefs of flint."

"O Emperor dread," the Frost King said, "refusal to
thee were vain,

For that which thou hast given to me, I but give to
thee back again.

A thousand years in my mountain press the gathering
snows I've laid,
And a berg of might for thy heart's delight my patient
hand has made.
See where on the sky with flicker and sheen the lights
reveal its crown;
While deep in the sea's dark heart it hides, full many a
fathom down."

Tremble, lords of the dragon flock, that fear nor reefs
nor rocks,
That dare defy the sea-mew's cry and the gales of the
equinox.

"I were well to hide in the harbor wide where the high
cliffs shelter make,
For the ruthless god of the sea is abroad his toll of the
race to take.
No war of rage does he deign to wage on the tower's of
man's device,
But he rides in state, serene as fate, enthroned on a
craft of ice.

The King sailed over the polar rim in the dawn of the
polar day,
For far to the south by his scouts' report the path of
the dragon lay.
A thousand slaves in the icy waves the craft of the god
impelled,
And the King alone on his icy throne his trident sceptre
held.
Rigid as stone he sat alone, impassive as if he slept,
And under his shaggy beetling brows his pitiless coun-
sel kept.

He rested his arm on a crystal crag, his beard on his
knee outspread,

And a crown of gold devised of old begirt his immortal
head.

His eyes are fixed on the ocean's rim, and ever from
morn to morn

He vengeance dreams on the mortal-schemes that meas-
ure his might with scorn.

A murmuring troubles the silent air that only a god
might hear,

And the Monarch knows as it louder grows that the
hour is drawing near.

IV

Night on the listening ocean. Silence among the stars.
And the glassy sea, serene and tranquil, catches their
silver bars.

Hush! A throb in the distance, and Neptune leans to
hear—

The mighty strokes of the dragon drawing ever anear
—anear!

Throbbing, rushing, roaring—but the craft of the god
sublime

As silent creeps through the trackless deeps as the echo-
less feet of Time.

Light! A light in the inky blackness glimmering leagues
away,

Like a faint new star arisen afar, but the god divines
his prey.

A gleam, a glitter, the eyes of the god that see afar
descry,

As a fragment fallen upon the sea from the heart of
the spangled sky.

But the cliffs of dread that tower ahead, incorporate in
the gloom,

Their terrors hide like the ends that bide in the dark
abysm of Doom.

On, the feet of the dragon drive, loud-lashing the sea
to foam,

And the god admires the lurid fires that forth of his
nostrils come.

Blue lightning flashes along his crest, while under the
lights below

Thoughtless of harm or the loud alarm blithe men pass
to and fro;

Men in a merry multitude the daughters of men attend,
The while their feet to melody sweet in rippling meas-
ure blend.

Beset is the heart of Poseidon, King, by the vision of
life and joy,

And an impulse rare him bids to spare the thing that
he would destroy.

His eye roves over the stately ship, the noblest e'er
designed,

And wherever he turns he still discerns the work of the
master mind.

And he said, "Right worthy the thing is done, and
akin to the gods' must be

The wit of men so keen of ken to guide it across the
sea."

His eye roved over the stately ship with a mariner's
shrewd delight,
And he paused to list how the water hissed in feathery
bows of white;
And the impulse still his malevolent will from his pur-
pose-foul nigh bent,
And nigh determined his heart to yield and veto the dire
event,
When lo, he spied on the ship's high side in mockery
of his fame,
Emblazoned wide in arrogant pride his dread unspeak-
able name.

Then hardened the heart of the Ocean King with a cold
and scornful rage.
He read the taunt of their vapoing vaunt, and instant
took up the gage.
He shook his staff with a frenzied laugh, as their pur-
blind watch he jeered,
And he stood erect with a fierce aspect as he cursed
through his flowing beard:
"Bear down, ye spawn of a river frog, that dare at my
might to mock,
And learn my throne is of stauncher stone than the
cliffs of your milk-white rock.

And down it bore on the lurking death with its burden
of living freight,
And the pilot saw with terror and awe the form of the
King! Too late!

Over, the wheel! And the gliding keel veered with
evading turn,
But the flinty edge of the sunken ledge ripped it from
stem to stern.
Swift and sharp with a mortal thrust it sheared the
glistening skin;
It crashed the ribs of the dragon ship and let the sea
pour in.

A shudder, a thrill through the vessel ran, it passed to
the multitude,
And a cry amazed to the sky they raised at the shock
so swift and rude.
Then high and steep the shadowy berg like a wraith
slid by the rail,
And silence fell on the blithest lip, and the loveliest
cheek grew pale.
They raised their eyes to the faithful stars, and lo, on
the deck they saw
The exultant Lord of the Sea's Discord, and their hearts
stood still with awe.

They saw the crown of empire rest upon his ancient
brow,
But never a trace of pity or grace did the gleam of his
eyes avow.
They watched his muttering lips—no word of help or
hope came thence,
But babblings like to a lisping child, and murmurings
void of sense.

They saw, they heard, aghast they stood, then far from
the presence dread

O'er the treacherous deck of the listing wreck precipi-
tate turned and fled.

Where, where will ye fly, O sons of the land that go
down to the sea in ships?

And who, O daughters, who will answer the plea of
your pallid lips?

The boats! The boats! And the cockle-shells are over
the bulwarks weighed

With a frantic freight for the jest of fate as the ropes
uneven are paid.

Down, down they whirl, and their shrill despair as they
plunge in the icy sea

Blends in the night with the mad delight of the demi-
gods' hideous glee.

But the jubilant King on the tilting deck heard neither
wail nor laugh,

As the flare of their frantic lightnings played on the
prongs of his trident staff.

Shall Majesty stoop to a demon sport, or heed who
lives or dies?

Shall not the soul of a god on the wings of exultation
rise?

And his babbling lips broke forth in song, and the
burden was high and proud,

Like the glittering rays of the sun that breaks full forth
of a noonday cloud.

"Ye wheeling heavens where Jove commands, ye
spangling stars divine,

The silver sea where ye lave your beams is mine! is
mine! is mine!

Though Jove hurl down his lightnings, though the
peaks rock to and fro,

Though Hell upheave his caverns, nought my sway
shall overthrow.

Three prongs upon my sceptre stand. I bid the storm
winds roar

When I call them out of the sea-wrought caves where
they stable along the shore.

"O little waves on sunlit isles, that scurry along the
beach,

And downward ripple and rush anew at the heights
beyond your reach,

I laugh at the crumbling shingle-wreck ye bear in your
soft retreat;

It is tribute due from the lands ye bring to lay at your
Master's feet.

Go, dance and play in your ancient way! Go, fetter
your isles with foam

That ye gather and spin where the sea sucks in through
the teeth of your coral comb.

"O thundering waves, that smite the cliffs with long-
drawn swinging shock,

Go, burst above their topmost crags! Unbuild them,
block by block!

Go, mine their stern foundations with tunnel and cave
and vault,

Till over the ignominious wreck ye scatter the sharp
sea salt.

No boldest bluff the ceaseless blows of thy battering-
ram may dure,

And the might of the Deep is in every sweep to make
the ruin sure.

"O coursing waves on the open sea, beyond all sight
of shore,

That sweep and roll on your wide patrol for ever and
ever more,

That pause nor rest in your endless quest as the circling
seas ye ride,

The crest ye bear none other may wear. Toss high your
heads in pride!

Your galloping ranks no winds may tire, nor the flight
of the petrel's wing,

For ye are the brood of a royal sire, and I am your Lord,
the King.

"O heaving waves, that mount and plunge to lay the
sea-floor bare,

When the trumpeting tempest shrill outwails the mar-
iner's pale despair—

When the wallowing hulks that ride the night go down
at the break of day,

Exult and open your hungry maw. They are still your
lawful prey!

Go, dare the sheltering ships in port to follow the way
they went,

And vaunt the might of your Sovereign Lord to the
stars in the firmament.

"O silent fields of the sunless deep, what treasure is
garnered there!

And some I gathered, and some was brought, but I hus-
band it all with care.

The labored wealth of the hinterland comes down on
the river-drift,

And some I snatch in the tempest, some red war sends
down in gift:

And I spread it all wherever it fall on the floor of the
dark abyss,

But never a prize on the sea bed lies so noble and rich
as this."

High rides the King on the afterdeck as the doomed
ship dips to dive,

And calm surveys the scintillant sea where a thousand
victims strive.

Majesty sits on his brow serene, and above it his ancient
crown,

And lower—deeper—unto her doom the stately ship
goes down.

A rush—a plunge—a gurgling swirl—she sinks to her
midnight grave,

A palace to be in the Northern Sea for the Monarch of
Wind and Wave.

In a marvellous hall of man's design the Monarch his
court convenes,

And mandate gives to his vassal lords for the rule of
their wide demesnes.

Still ply the ships on the trails of trade—with dipping
flags they go,

As they pass that way where the master craft and the
dead men lie blow.

And women on shore far follow the line where the
last faint smoke trails dips.

And pray for the safe return of those who go down to
the sea in ships.

TRAIL BLAZERS

The scene of this poem is the picturesque junction of the Pend d'Oreille and Columbia Rivers on the International Boundary. The Thompson River and the Douglas fir commemorate the two men.

I STOOD where the Columbia rolled
Majestic, seaward, night and day,
And phantoms of the strong and bold,
Men born, but in heroic mould,
Passed by me on that great highway.

I saw them draw their stout canoe
On yonder spacious gravel beach.
I heard the shouting of the crew
Around the camp-fire, and I knew
'Twas our old homely English speech.

With locks unshorn, with beard uncouth
Held forth their leader jovially.
'Twas David Thompson, headed south,
Who followed first from source to mouth
This mighty mountain artery.

Not stronger flowed its pulsing tide
Than surged the current of his soul.
He matched its majesty with pride,
Its terrors fearlessly defied,
Though into Tartarus it roll.

The fragrance of their camp-fire smoke

Like incense to my nostrils came.

I drank in every word they spoke;

'Twas magic, potent to invoke

The gods of courage and of fame.

Their camp-fire flickered—they were gone;

I heard their voices as they passed.

They talked of fabled Oregon,

And boasted they should prove it one

With this that drained a land so vast.

But straight another crew drew near

The seething rocks of Pend d'Oreille,

For well their pilot knew that here

In living water crystal clear

Their toilful thirst they might allay.

Oh, who was this, and how renowned?

What meed of victory did he claim?

'Twas David Douglas, homeward bound,

By toil and hard adventure crowned

With merit of his country's fame.

From Kootenay to far Spokane

None knew the land so well as he,

Nor where this wondrous river ran

Through regions yet untamed of man

Down to the boundless Western Sea.

As in a magic treasure cave

His quick keen eye ran to and fro,

And with a golden heart and brave

He brought the best o'er land and wave

Upon his fellows to bestow.

The precious freight again they shipped—
Their arms were stout, their voices rang.
From feathered oars the water dripped,
And in the mists they northward slipped,
Whence floated back the song they sang.

O bold adventurers, pass on,
Whom toil nor danger could impeach.
Your presence as in days long gone
Like fragrance lingers still upon
The spring, the river and the beach.

The star of Thompson, lest it pale,
The gleam of silvery streams prevents;
Nor shall the fame of Douglas fail
While tower o'er every mountain vale
A million emerald monuments.

The brood of Jason! Such their birth
Who track the dragon to his den.
Give endless honor to their worth,
The great pathfinders of the earth
Who point the way to lesser men.

Oh, hallowed is the path they trod
Through hall of fame and crowded mart;
More sacred where with courage shod
They first impressed the unsullied sod
Here in the wilderness apart.

When in my futile wanderings
I cross the path of one of these,
I feel an influence that brings
Hunger of heart for nobler things,
And vow new gifts to Hercules.

FATHER JOGUES

After a long period of untold hardship and horror as a missionary among the Indians, Father Jogues had escaped to France. Though mutilated, he was, by special dispensation, allowed full privileges of his priesthood, and returned to Montreal. When a new war threatened he was chosen to go again among the Indians as an envoy of peace. The tragic moment when he received his instructions is the theme of this poem.

MY noble son, true servant of the Church,
In whom the very spirit is of Him
Whose blessed Name our Sacred Order bears,
I summon thee to lay a holy charge
Upon thy willing shoulders.

Father Jogues

In reverence before his Bishop stood,
And heard his mission.

All of our sacred band
Whose feeble numbers bear the holy torch
Of truth in this benighted wilderness
Stands trembling on the brink of cruel doom.
Last autumn's peace, confirmed by every rite,
By feast and dance and oath and wampum belt,
We thought it made us friends, and bound us all,
Algonquin, Mohawk, Montagnais and French,
In one great league of love and brotherhood.
As well yoke bulls with cobwebs when the smell
Of blood is in their nostrils, as impose
An oath of peace upon these untamed tribes.
Their hatred is but hidden, not forgot.

Their fury frets to loose red war, black war,
Such war as none but hell-taught devils wage.
In envious hatred of our Mother Church.
Our hope of peace is most in thee, and thou
Must go, commissioned in the name of France
To seal the league, and in their midst to found
The Mission of the Martyrs, in the name
Of Christ and Holy Church.

The bishop's words
Fell like the stroke of doom.

My son! My Son!
You are in pain! You faint!

The black-robed priest,
His face all blanched, his eyeballs staring wild,
Staggered and fell into his bishop's arms.
The bishop leaned above him, sore amazed,
And saw him shudder, saw his ashy lips
Move, framing voiceless words beneath his hands,
Those shapeless palms, fire-scarred and fingerless.
He stooped to catch the words—it was a prayer,
A cry of pain,—O Salve, Domine!
He knew—it was a human cry and groan,
The one dark moment in a strong man's life.
He knew the man would win, and with a prayer
He turned and left him in the church alone.

Far though the night the priest in agony
Knelt in the dark and wrestled—O my God,
But life is sweet—this bitter death is more
Than I can bear—Si possit, Domine—
He stopped—Dear Christ, they are Thy words—this
cup.

This cup! But must I drink it? Have I not
-Drunk deep enough? O Christ, their jagged knives—
These hands! They bound me, maimed me, joint by
joint,
They lashed me prostrate, gnawed me with their teeth;
Heaped living coals upon my naked flesh;
Tore out my beard; thrust me with thorns, and bound
My wrists with thongs and hung me in a tree!
See! See! They come again! O save me, God! —
They mock Thy name,—they will not pity me.
Back, friends! O Christ, I cannot go—'tis death—
A thousand deaths! and years before my time!
Of if I live, each day is worse than death.
They curse me, jeer me, charge me with the arts
Of hell to blight their harvests, and to slay
Their children with the plague. They kill and feast
In honor of their hateful demon gods,
And I, a priest of God Most High, must starve
Amid their heathen plenty. Night by night
I see them lash their devilish frenzy up
With shrieks of writhing victims. Day by day
I am their slave, in scanty deerskin clad,
Plodding through snow for bark to feed their fires.

Oh, if it were a dream! But, 'tis no dream.
No dream could be so black. No hideous
Illusion of the night could leave these scars.
Oh, is this life, these years that I have lived?
And is my labor lost, my life in vain?
It is, if I must die. O let me live—
I am but weak—I have not served Thee much—
But let me labor out my manhood's length.

I will not murmur—any life but this—
O, any life, but not this living death—
This daily death that ends in endless death.

He ceased. His heart was hard. Did heaven hear?
His hands convulsed. His lips were marble cold.
He gazed in frozen horror on the dark,
And filled it with a myriad martyrdoms.
His voice was silent. What could words do more,
But groan to Heaven from out the depths of Hell
That hopeless prayer—Si possit, Domine?
Long he knelt clutching at the altar-rail,
And gazed before, half-conscious of his pain,
And ever and anon he shuddered cold,
And ever and anon he prayed again,
Scarce knowing it—Si possit, Domine!
No other plaint, no other cry—until
At last the oft-reiterated words
Broke through the icy numbness of his brain.
He knew them—knew their meaning—knew again
Who spake them first; then saw the smitten Christ
That other night of whole-souled agony.
His Christ! And Christ knew all his toil and pain.
Oh, balm to pain! His Christ! His cry was Christ's!—
O, let this cup pass from me! Could he pray
That other prayer so worth of the Christ?—
Thy will, not mine, be done.

The first faint dawn
Fell through the cloisteral windows when the peace
Came down into his soul and gave him strength,
The strength for sacrifice. He bowed his head—

Forgive my weakness, Christ—and let me go—
If I am worthy.— Then a holy joy
Filled all his being, as the risen sun
Filled all the church with glory. When its beams
Fell o'er his scarred and mutilated hands,
He raised them heavenward with the cry—Dear Christ,
Thy yoke is light! O Death, where is thy sting?

THE DANCE IN THE BUFFALO SKULL

From *Old Indian Legends*, by Zitkala-Sa.

NIGHT upon the prairie,
Stars a-twinkling bright;
All the landscape black and scary,
Pitchy black! Oh, very, very;
Just the time when mouse and fairy

Lose their sunshine fright.
Just a silvery thread of moon—
Slipping, slipping down—and soon
Little folk who love the dark
Peep out—listen—creep out—hark!
Was that a coyote puppy's bark?
Or a mousing owl? Or a loon?
Oh, so swift their fairy fears—
Oh, so sharp their mousey ears,
Lightest footfall, slightest sound;
Quick as winking, off they bound.
Down where shadows dark and deep

Hide them safe from danger,
Soft on tiptoe in they creep;
Oh, so long they silent keep,
You would think them fast asleep;
Then they come again and peep,
Listening for the stranger.

Look! What is that on the edge of the prairie?

Coming out of the meadow?

Big and round and bright and scary,

Gliding along in the shadow!

Creeping—nigher—nigher—

Just at the height of the grass—

Two big balls of pale green fire

Shining like globes of glass,

They seem so ghostly, weird and pale—

But I see no teeth, and I see no tail,

And whether they fly or walk about,

Or float like feathers, I can't make out.

I hear no growl, no footstep fall—

Oh, maybe it's nothing at all, at all.

Out in the grass in a place I know

Is a great white glistening skull,

All that is left from long ago

Of a terrible Buffalo Bull.

Twenty summers he roamed the plain

And threw the dust in the air.

Twenty winters he tossed his mane

And bellowed his dreadful dare.

He trampled the Indians' cornfield down

When the tassels were waving green,

And tore through the heart of the teepee town

On the edge of the big ravine.

But—the Great Avenger shot him,

Shot him with his magic arrow,

And—the very day they got him,

Indian children sucked his marrow.

Fifty years it is since then
When the buffalo giant fell;
Fifty years! And grey-haired men
Still the story love to tell.
Up and down the ancient trail
Where the buffaloes went to water,
Fifty years his spirit pale
Passes daily since the slaughter.
He is looking for his cows—
He used to take such care of them.
Let him roar—they'll never rouse;
He'll find nor hide nor hair of them.
He is looking for his bones—
I don't know what he'll do with them;
Let him search among the stones—
He'll maybe find a few of them.
His skull is lying white upon the plain;
There's a prickly rosebush growing through
his ear;
And the sun and wind and rain
Search the crannies of his brain,
While his teeth are growing looser every year.
Now a dry old skull of a buffalo
Is good for nothing, perhaps you know,
But to serve as a house
For cricket or mouse
When the moon is down and the stars aglow.
When the sky above is navy blue,
And all the ground is black and scary,
See them coming, now one, now two,
Tiptoe, creeping along so wary.

Silently in thro' the holes they go
Into the buffalo's big brain-box,
And they set a watchman above, below,
For a buffalo skull has no bars or locks.
The picket above, if he hears a squeak,
Will warn them all with an Eek! Eek! Eek!
And the folk will know
Just where to go,
And they'll hustle away by the door below.
And the picket below, if he sees a spook,
Will warn them all with an Ook! Ook! Ook!
Then out they will shove
By the door above,
And never a waiting for hat or glove.

Oh, what a goodly company
Is here assembled
Of prairie folk that like to frolic after dark.
Several silk-eared mice with long tails trailing;
Fire-flies with lanterns under their coats;
A dapper cricket toting a violin,
Ready to play to the boom of a bull-frog's tympani.
Here comes a June-bug in with his bag-pipe wailing.
Let the music begin!
And oh, how the great hall trembled
When all the folk assembled
Here for their annual June-moon lark
Sang in a key to suit their several throats,
And the bull-frog boomed his drum,
And the June-bug droned his hum,
And the cricket in the middle
Scraped the high string on his fiddle,
All in one magnificent symphony.

But the pickets at the door
Looking out behind, before,
Do not see two balls of fire

Coming out of the meadow along the river,
Gliding nigher, nigher, nigher,

Lit with a dull green flame, and all a-quiver,
Like two shimmering, glowing globes of glass,
Just so high, the height of the prairie grass.

Oh, but the great white hall is bright,
For the fireflies' lamps are all alight,
And the dazzling beams in the dark are sped
Through the many queer holes in a buffalo's head.
"What does it mean?" said the birds outside,

Roused from sleep where they hid in the willows;
And they hopped out of bed, and far and wide
They fluttered away and forgot their pillows.

"What does it mean?" said the fierce coyotes,
But they stood far off and daren't come near;
Then they lifted their heads, and out of their throats
Came a dismal howl and a yelp of fear.

But the folk in the hall,
Not one of them heard
The yelp or the call
Of coyote or bird:

For it's up and over and down through the middle,
Out and across by the wall they come;
Back and forth to the tune of the fiddle,
And step to the beat of the big bass drum.
Oh, it's bow to your partner, now to the rear—
In and out in a ring they wind;

And it's, Carry your tail on your arm, my dear,
For it's far too long to be trailing behind.
Oh, but the piper, he droned his hum!
Oh, but the drummer, he boomed his drum,
And the choristers sang and the fiddler played,
And they danced in the light that the fireflies made.

And all the while they're gayly dancing,
Across the prairie are still advancing
Those terrible eyes with the greenish glare
And the flickering glow and the ghostly stare,
And the vengeful look so fierce and fell
It almost frightens me just to tell.

But the mice don't know,
And away they go,
Hipperty, hopperty, heel and toe.
The fiddler gives them the grand old tune
Of the strawberry moon
In the month of June.
Merrily round the hall they swing
And shout and sing
Till the rafters ring—
Retreat—advance—
And away they prance,
For this is the tune of the supper dance.

Now came the best of the whole big party:
Pieces to nibble of sun-dried roots;
Squeaking and chattering, all ate hearty,
Feasting on duck-eggs and strawberry fruits.
Slices of venison—where did they get them?—
Mushroom buttons, and honey—and then,

One polished his teeth on the floor to whet them,
Found a wild onion, and started again.

One in a lull
Got up to speak,
But he was so full
He could hardly squeak.
He'd eaten enough
To last him a week,
But he tried to stuff
Some more in his cheek.

"Friends and neigh—"
He stammered, and that
Was all he could say,
So down he sat;
And they passed the word
From each to each,
But they never heard
The rest of his speech.

One young loon
Got out on the floor,
And called for a tune
To dance some more;
But the cricket said, "Ho, sir,
Rest your feet!
Surely you know, sir,
Fiddlers eat."

Said a gray old Billy,
Begrizzled and hoary,
"For a bite of a lily
I'll tell you a story."

Then all in delight
Flocked round—such a crew—
And they gave him a bite
Of a lily to chew:
“’Twas a tale I heard—”
And their bright eyes glistened,
And the scout at the word
Looked in and listened—

“On a night I spent—
I was young and bold—
In a warrior’s tent
When the wind was cold—
Of a ghost that hides
In the woods by the river—”
All hugged their sides,
With a queer little shiver.

Now in the world wide,
What’s the good of a scout
Who listens inside
When he ought to watch out?

For if he had he would have seen
Two balls of fire, yellow and green,
Like two shimmering globes of glass,
Very low in the prairie grass,
Like two moons when the moon is full,
Coming straight for the buffalo skull;
Creeping, creeping along the ground,
Nearer, larger, without a sound
All of a sudden, they rush like rockets
Into the dry old skull’s eye-sockets.

Just when the tale of the grey old Billy
Came to a climax weird and thrilly,
All in the ball-room heard a shriek!
'Twas the scout above with his Eek! Eek! Eek!
And to make the panic the more contagious
He screamed in a manner most outrageous.
That's how sudden the frolic ended!
That's how sudden the dark descended,
For the fireflies doused their lamps and fled,
And hid all night in the grass in dread.
The June-bug started his mournful drone,
And it sounded terrible all alone,
But he circled about in the darkened hall
Till he crashed to a finish against the wall.
Mice ran this way and mice ran that.
One shrieked out, "It a Cat! A Cat!"
But the grey old Billy was scared the most,
And he cried, "No! It's the *Buffalo Ghost!*"
All helter-skelter slid out behind,
And the poor old drummer went out of his mind,
Took one long leap and smote his head,
Cr-runch! on the ceiling, and fell back dead.

But the fiddler cricket's a wise little freak:
He knows when to be silent and when to speak,
And he of the party fared best of all,
For he quietly hid in a crack in the wall.
He often looks back when he finds it dull
To the night of the dance in the buffalo skull,
And he's laughed to himself, not once nor twice,
At the thought of a *Buffalo* hunting *Mice!*

IMAM DIN

STUPID, crazy old Iman Din—
Learned in his youth that *to think* is sin—
Carried a burden for years and years,
Burden of reverence mixed with fears;
Struggled and strove, and at last gave in—
Died—the happy old Imam Din.

* * * * *

Imam Din is a laughing boy;
Life is vigor and vigor is joy.
These his inheritance first and chief,
Like the bird its song, and the tree its leaf,
And the sun its light as it rolls on high
Through the fathomless blue of the glorious sky.
Playmates revel and laugh and shout
While the years roll in and the years roll out.
And joy is his full and abounding store,
For he knows but Now, and he asks no more.

But there comes a change over Imam's face,
And a pensive sadness finds a place.
His playmates note that he does not play
The same old games in the same old way.
He will sit all day by the brooklet's brink
And gaze in its crystal depth and think.
He will hear the song from the nightingale's throat

And strive to fathom its pregnant note.
He will gaze on the sun as it climbs the sky,
Or the moon at evening, and wonder why.
The sighing wind in the bamboo brake
Has a secret for which his heart doth ache.
The flowers bloom, and the flowers die,
And no one is there to answer why.
And his lips are silent, or if they speak—
O, who will tell me the thing I seek?
O, who hath fathomed the things that be,
Or felt the hunger that tortures me?

Then a holy friend of a blinded race
In priestly garments approached the place.
And Imam fell at his feet and cried:
"O, tell me the secrets that all things hide.
The flowers, the brook and the winds that blow,
They tell us but half of the things they know,
And their deepest secret, I know full well,
Is worth far more than the things they tell."

And the priest looks down on him, all amaze,
"The Now and the Here are enough," he says.
"Be glad as you are, for the things are hid.
More wisdom to know have the gods forbid."

"But, say, O Priest, if the Now and the Here
Have made my life to me deeply dear,
Would joy not deepen if wise we were
In the vastly mightier Then and There?"

But the priest with his fingers stopped his ears,
And shrieked at Imam, all in tears—
"Blasphemer, begone, ere the gods descend,
And bring thy life to its worthy end."

In Imam's heart there awoke the thought:
"Then the gods are cruel, I love them not."
But he cast his hopes to the crushing wheel
Of a creed that knows not and cannot feel;
And he said, "I cannot, if gods deny,
For they still are gods, and I am but I."

Stupid, crazy old Imam Din,
'Twas then your craziness did begin.
When Truth was hidden, and seeking sin,
Then joy was ended for Imam Din.
And the days thereafter in darkness grew,
And only the words of the priest were true.
The blue died out of your wondrous eyes,
And your eyelids drooped, too heavy to rise.
No joy was now in the murmuring brook,
No peace in the sacred sylvan nook,
No sympathy in the twinkling eye
Of a blazing star in a starlit sky.
No rainbow hopes, no spring-time cheer,
But ever-present oppressive fear,
And conscience murdering midnight peace
For your own heart's secret blasphemies.
The yoke your fathers had forged to wear,
No choice was left but the son must bear;
And sky was another name for fate,
And life but a bending beneath its weight.

Thus Imam grew to a man's estate,
And wealth and pride at his door did wait.
And sons were his and daughters dear,
And he loved them all with a reverent fear.
If happiness lies in abundant store,
Then Imam Din had no need of more.
But ever his eyes went to and fro
For the happiness lost in the long ago.
He prided not in the grand array
Or the thousand charms of a pageant day,
But he stole by the river away from men
To dream of the scenes of youth again.
For his heart was hungry as to and fro
He wandered, lost in the long ago.

Then sword and pestilence, hand in hand
With devastation went through the land,
And Imam's home and his wealth and fame
In chaos fled and consuming flame.
And keener pain in a keener fire,
His gift to the gods in the funeral pyre.
One son who erred by the tiger's lair
The ravening beasts of the jungle rare;
And one to the death that stalked the land
Went out—as a candle held in hand.
But he dared not murmur, and could not pray,
For—the gods have taken them, so they say.

O Imam Din, in the world alone!
O heart of flesh in a world of stone,

'Tis Love must teach what the world would know
Of the secret sought in the long ago.

* * * * *

'Tis the native streets of a happy lad
Where once on a time the sun was glad,
Where shout and laughter awoke the day,
And scarce at evening died away.

'Tis an aged man, and he loves the place,
Though of youth or friend he can find no trace.
He totters about on a cripple staff,
And the street boys know him and rudely laugh,
They mock and jeer at his raiment thin,
And hoot him, "Crazy old Imam Din!"

But Imam lives in a world apart,
And breaks his crust with a happy heart..
No thought has he for their shallow mirth,
For he knows the secret of sky and earth.
He sits all day by the brooklet's brim,
And smiles therein as it smiles at him.
The night bird sings, and the old man hears,
And joy wells up to his eyes in tears.
The wind still sighs in the bamboo brake,
But its dearest secret he hears it speak.

Imam Din with his grief had done,
When he learned that the secret and he were one.

WINDERMERE FERRY

In memory of Dr. Charles Wales Drysdale of the Canadian Geological Survey, and of William J. Gray, of the British Columbia Mountaineering Club, who were drowned in an attempt to cross the Kootenay River in the course of field work, July, 1917.

“**H**O! for the Ferry!”
Cried gay Billy Gray,
As we stood on the brink
Of the wild Kootenay.

The last of the Rockies
Rose lofty and sheer
As here in the valley
Of wide Windermere

We looked on the river
That swirled as it sped
Silent and swift
O'er the stones of its bed,

Or raced to a rapid
And churned into spray,
Then shot green and fearsome
Far, far on its way.

“Ho, Ferryman, ho!
In the name of the King!
Fat is the fee
If you speedily bring

Us and our packs
On your river-wise barge,
And set us tonight
On its nethermost marge."

So made we merry
By wild Kootenay,
Though we knew that no ferry
Came ever that way.

And Charlie, our Chief,
At our merriment smiled—
"We'll cross it, my lads,
Were it never so wild.

"The Rockies, undaunted,
We've left at our back.
We've met every danger
That perilled our track,

"And now by the Kootenay
Here when we stand,
And see the great Purcells
Loom lofty and grand,

"Shall the wild river daunt us
With bluster and brawl?
Or shall we tomorrow
Turn ferrymen all?"

* * * * *

O here was a chief
That a man might adore—
A mate to the marrow,
A king to the core.

The grip of his hand
Was convincing and warm,
And cheery his greeting
In sunshine and storm;

Sure-footed and during
Where bold ridges ramp;
A hero in danger,
A comrade in camp;

'Twas the face of an angel
Lit up when he smiled,
The love of a woman,
The heart of a child.

Devoted to duty
He gave but his best;
An hundred high peaks
Did his valor attest;

From the peaks he had looked
Where the rock-billows roll,
And the vast panorama
Had ennobled his soul;

The wild mountain torrents
Ran free in his veins,
And the spell of the wilderness
Held him in chains.

'Twas the gleam of a challenge
We saw in his eye,
The thrill of a purpose
Undaunted and high,

And our answer came swift
As our answer could be:
"We'll cheat the bold Ferryman out
Out of his fee.

"Tomorrow we'll pay
To the Rockies farewell,
Fling scorn to the river,
And, hail! the Purcell!"

* * * * *

O there in the wild
In the close of the day,
How gay we beguiled
The swift hours away,

How heaped the dry driftwood
And laughed as it roared;
How cheered the red sparks
As they crackled and soared.

What riot! What revel!
How many a tale—
The lore of adventure,
The toil of the trail;

Till wearied we fell
To remember, and think,
And watch the bright flames
Slowly flicker and sink.

Then from the lone spaces
Of silence and gloam
Came voices and faces
Of loved ones at home.

Bright scenes of Vancouver
Troop in through the night—
Its streets and their traffic,
Its bustle, its light;

The rock-ribbed Pacific,
The wide ocean sweep—
Till the sounds of its sighing
Lull Billy to sleep.

And Charlie, forgetting,
Is carried away
To the wife that he loves
In her home in Glace Bay.

To sweet Dornacilla,
First born for his joy,
And bonnie wee Alpin,
His new baby boy.

And the Kootenay murmurs
Its low lulling strains,
And the camp-fire dies
Till there nothing remains

But the glint of the snow
In the deep mountain scars
High flanking the Windermere
Under the stars.

* * * * *

"Tumble up! Tumble up!"
Said the bluff Billy Gray,
"For big is the business
Awaiting this day.

"Tumble up! Tumble out!"
And he led us the way—
"For the King and his business
Admit no delay!"

So, instant awake
To the day newly born,
We stood to attention
Brow-bare to the morn.

And there stood the Rockies—
What sight to behold!
Their sharp-shivered edges
All flaming with gold;

And over against them
The glorious Purcell,
Rose-tinted, in splendour
That no man may tell;

And there winding under
With petulant brawl,
The man-mocking architect—
Sculptor of all;

And there on its margin
Stood bold in relief,
Fair-haired and masterful,
Charlie, our Chief!

Silent he stood
By the full-flowing brim;
Intent on the river,
Divining its whim.

Straight-shouldered, trail-hardened,
Up-standing and trim—
He looked at the river,
And we looked at him.

Then he turned, and his smile
Was both wistful and ware—
"It's a fight to a finish, lads,
What do ye dare?"

And our answer came swift
As our answer could be—
"No river could daunt
Such bold fellows as we.

"We'll build us a ferry
And harry the soul
Of the hoary bewhiskered
Old Taker of Toll."

O here's to the Woodman!
High-honored his line,
Who fashions his timbers
With cunning design;

Who bridges the canyon
With trestle and sill,
Or binds the morass
To the bent of his will.

O here's to the Woodman,
And here's to his craft,
For bred to his cunning
We builded a raft.

So sturdy our shoulders,
So brawny our backs,
We waked the loud echoes
To sound of the axe,

And bending and hewing
We made the chips fly
From logs of the lumberman
Stranded and dry.

From sun-seasoned cedar
We fashioned each beam,
For lightly our craft
Must ride high on the stream.

From tough-fibred fir-wood
We fashioned each brace,
And lashed them all fitly
And firmly in place.

From sinewy hemlock
We fashioned each oar,
To strive with the river
And win to the shore.

And lo, ere the down-riding
Sun fiercely fell
O'er the loftiest peak
Of the gleaming Purcell,

High-mettled and eager
Lay under our feet
The Windermere Ferry
All fair and complete.

* * * * *

We're away! We're away!
With a heave and a thrill!
Dip deep with the paddle!
Pull, pull with a will!

No languid lagoon
In this turbulent tide!
No idle gondola
The craft that ye guide!

Five thousand feet falling
In foaming cascade
The heart of this water
So wanton has made.

Be strong, O our paddles!
Be buoyant, our launch,
For well have we builded ye,
Sturdy and staunch.

O Lord! How responsive,
How blithely she leaps,
As onward the river
Impetuous sweeps.

But taut every sinew,
And tense every nerve,
We drive where the river
Draws round in a curve;

And faint from below
Comes the wild rapid's roar,
As proudly exulting
We win to the shore.

O then did the wilderness
Denizens hear
The wild echoes answer
As cheer upon cheer,

Full throated, proud-hearted,
We gave for the fray,
When we conquered the might
Of the mad Kootenay.

* * * * *

Now who will return?—
For the shadows grow long—
O, who is a hero
Both valiant and strong?

For half of our burden
Lies still on the shore,
And some one must venture
To carry it o'er.

Then fain would we all,
But Chief Charlie said, "Nay,
None other but I
And the bluff Billy Gray."

So, heaving and straining
With might and with main,
We towed our brave barge
Up the river again.

And then our two heroes
Pushed off from the shore,
Fierce battle to wage
With the river once more.

How eager we followed
As onward they steered,
And safe as they landed
How wildly we cheered.

But now with their burdens—
O valiant men!—
They set their brave breasts
To the river again.

* * * * *

Ye cold serene Rockies!
Ye glistening Purcell!
Ye Powers sublime
That in Windermere dwell!

Ye mists of the evening
That rise from the stream!
Ye breezes that die
Like a sigh in a dream!

Ye sombre-boughed cedars
All hoary with age!
Weave spells for this river,
And temper its rage.

Breathe calm on its fury,
Speak peace to its heart,
And to our brave comrades
Safe conduct impart.

Vain, vain invocation!
What Power could frame
A spell its demoniac
Fury to tame?

On, onward they come
In the frenzy of strife!
O Heaven! Was ever
Such battle for life?

On, onward they come
To the curve of the shore
Where stoutly contending
We landed before.

What language could utter,
What pencil could trace
The grim courage of will
That sits stern on each face?

God of Mercy! They've missed it!—
We shudder aghast,
For the fierce river seizes
And hurries them past.

On swiftly they sweep
As the mad eddies whirl,
Arm-faint with the fighting,
Brain-sick with the swirl.

We shout and we beckon
In frantic appeal,
But ever more madly
The waves rock and reel.

Straight onward exulting
The wild water pours,
And loud in the stillness
The cataract roars.

And onward bluff Billy
And Charlie our Chief,
Far, far beyond rescue,
Ride straight for the reef.

* * * * *

Benumbed with cold horror
In silence we gaze,
Our thoughts in the mists
Of the river amaze.

'Tis some dark illusion,
Some mischievous spell,
Some idle night vision
The dawn will dispel.

So seems the mad river,
By sorcery sped;
The haunt of a Ferryman,
Hoary and dread.

And e'en as we gaze
In the thrall of our dream,
The shreds of the gray swaying
River mists seem,

Slow drifted together
By light wandering whiff,
To weave the vague form
Of the River-man's skiff.

They gather, they waver,
They thicken—and now
A shadowy Ferryman
Stands in the prow.

Grey-mantled and stately,
Grim-ghostly and weird,
And the breeze flutters idly
The strands of his beard.

Out over the river
He moves on the shore,
And guides his light craft
Without rudder or oar.

O the river is rough,
O the river is strong,
But the mystical Ferry
Glides smoothly along.

O rude is the river,
And swift is its flow,
But the mystical Ferry
Moves stately and slow

Athwart the fierce torrent
As faint the wind breathes,
Far down where the cataract
Tumbles and seethes.

* * * * *

O God, how the surges
In foam-frenzy dance!
They break our enchantment—
Gone, gone is our trance!

For there our two heroes
Have finished their fight—
Holy Heaven, have mercy,
And shut out the sight!

They leap!—The wild waters
Close cruel and grey,
And the mists on their bosom
Float formless away.

And tossed on their billows
Like light autumn leaf,
Our stout-built raft
Crumples frail on the reef.

* * * * *

Oh, down by the river
We search and we call,
But nothing replies
But the mad waterfall.

No camp-fire revelry
Wakes the Purcell,
As we tent at its feet
In the horrors of hell.

The chill shadows deepen;
The long twilight wanes;
Earth sinks into darkness
Till nothing remains

But the glint of the snow
In its deep mountain scars,
Cold, silent and pitiless
Under the stars.

LYRICS OF AFFECTION

THE CLAY AND THE POTTER

CLAY—in the hands of the Potter—
Cold and lifeless Clay—
Clay in the hands of the Potter

Shapeless, passive lay.
But the Potter's fingers touched it
And wrought it, till Beauty smiled,
Wrought it in Beauty's image,
Creation's fairest child.

Clay at the feet of the Potter
Cold and lifeless lay—
Fashioned in Beauty's image,
Lovely—but only Clay.
But Life came by and touched it,
And the passive lifeless Clay
Throbbled with a chemic impulse,
But still by the Master lay.

Clay in the guise of Beauty,
And the spark of Life within—
But it lay at the feet of the Potter,
Clay as it e'er had been,
Till Sense came by and touched it,
And the Silence and the Night
Rang with a hundred harmonies,
And throbbled with the joy of Light.

But still it lay by the Master
Passive as when he came,
Till a Soul came by and touched it
With the tongue of a cold blue flame.
And the Life and the Light and the Harmony
Awoke in a Conscious Thought,
And the Master looked that the form should rise,
But it trembled—and motioned not.

Heavy the heart of the Potter,
Heavy with helpless pain,
For the end his pride has purposed
Is greater than he can gain:
The skill of the cunning fingers;
The Beauty, the Life, the Soul—
But there lacketh a subtle something,
A motive—a self-control.

And he knew not who should help him,
And he turned him in grief and fear,
But Love came by and touched him,
And spoke to him words of cheer.
Then Love leaned ~~low~~ and whispered,
Just whispered—and fled away:
And the Man arose and followed,
And he follows for aye and aye.

THE CLOUDS IN SYMPATHY


FLASH, Lightning, flash!
And let your angry thunders roar and crash.
'Tis but the fiery surgings-up in me,
The voice of wrath I may not own to be.

Weep, Heavens, weep!
An everlasting Night of Mourning keep!
Let faster flow thy tears and drown in me
Thoughts of a long-sought joy that may not be.

Moan, ye winds, moan!
Rise, till to sobbing tempests ye are grown!
Thy tones but cry the silent grief in me
That weeps above the grave of Cannot-Be.

Fall, Darkness, fall!
And wrap your gloom about me like a pall.
For since the Might have been may never be,
To see the Coming—What is that to me?

WANDERING WIND OF THE WEST


WANDERING Wind of the West,
Have you been with my love today?
Over the fields where the buttercup
grows

And avens the tips of its pink petals shows,
Miles upon miles away—

Over the ocean that lies between,
Ocean of meadow and prairie land green—
Have you, O Wind of the West,
Seen aught of my love today?

Scarce is a fortnight by,
He was here, he was here with me;
Here, with his tender kind blue eye,
And his kindlier heart was he.
He was here, he was here for a day—
'Twas a day of heaven to me.

We walked by the shore of the roaring flood,
And we talked by the old elm tree.
O, swift as the tide of that bounding stream
That glad day fled away.
And slow as the life of the elm doth seem
Each lead-footed morning grey.

For he promised to come again
When the robins have left the nest,

But, oh, have you seen him today, today,
Wind from out of the West?.

Listen, Wind of the West—

It does me good to tell.

It was here on this hill I saw him last;

When he waved me a sad farewell.

Then slowly he turned away,

And a shade came over the light,

But he came again and waved to me,

Then fled, and the day was night.

But I love this hill since then,

And I love to sit on its crest,

For it's here, it's here I shall see him again

When the robins have left the nest.

West Wind, bear him a line—

O stay, do you think you could?

He asked me that day if I'd be his bride,

And I didn't tell him I would.

"Wait till you come again,"

I said, as we bade goodbye.

But I wish he were with here today

With his gentle, kind blue eye.

Nay, I will not trust thee, Wind—

Yet, turn again to the West.

Bid him speedily come to me,

And I will tell him the rest.

O Love, far over the sea,

The prairie, the sea of the West,

The time to wait seems long to me

Till the robins have left the nest.

AMOR CRESCENS

TWO moons ago, my love,
This same old silvery moon, forever new,
We saw hang crescent in the eve, above
The houses, in the blue.

We watched it slowly glide
Adown the twilight west and fade from view,
And little though we, watching side by side,
Our love was crescent too.

One moon ago, my love,
In higher sky, and large and brighter grown,
Framed in the shadows of the maple grove,
We saw the same old moon.

A vision sweet and grand
We deemd it, and the hours swiftly flew;
But in our hearts, while watching, hand in hand,
A sweeter vision grew.

To night, tonight, my dove,
The same old moon we see, though far apart.
So distance hath no power to mar the love
That binds us heart to heart.

In full refulgency
It rises o'er the resting of the wheat,
And all the untried vastness of the sky
Invites its willing feet.

And all our common path
Before us lies, and we shall walk in light,
The full-orbed splendor of our mutual faith,
O, happy, happy night.

Dear heart, still this to say:
The brightest moon will cross the vastest sky
And set, but see we not transcendent day
Drive every shadow by?

THE LOVER'S PLAINT

Ruthenian Folk Song

Translated into crude English by Max Oucharek, Rhein, Sask.,
and rebuilt metrically by the present author. Sung to a haunting
minor melody.

WILD the wind is driving the rain;
The trees to the earth are bending;
And my heart in grief and pain
Its tears in the storm is blending.

Lost am I in shadowy; I see
No end on a glad tomorrow;
Then it's only left to me
To weep in lonely sorrow.

Oh, where are thou, soul of my soul?
My heart for thy voice is yearning.
Long I wait in sadness and dole
The comfort of thy returning.

NELSON TOWN

A beautifully situated town of about 8,000 inhabitants on the West Arm of Kootenay Lake. The town is built on the sloping front of the delta of Cottonwood Creek, which is tributary to the Kootenay River within the town limits.

DEAR Nelson Town, sweet Nelson Town,
Had I the pen would set thee down,
Thy very self, would none believe
How fair thou art at fading eve.

Had I the pen, had I the power
To limn thee in the evening hour,
There is no theme would so employ
My moments in a deeper joy.

I've travelled far, I've wandered wide,
And still a thousand miles divide
My feet from those steep woodland ways
Where oft my longing fancy strays.

Up one steep path, when low the sun
Declines, his daily journey run,
I climb, and there beneath me lies
A scene to rival Paradise.

Full flows thy stream o'er silver sand;
Broad-shouldered round the mountains stand;
And where the aspiring pine-tops cease
'Gins heav'n's blue twilit veil of peace.

E'en now those tender charms appear;
The sounds of evening reach mine ear,
Yet all in such sweet concord bound
As sound were sight and sight were sound.

The shredded mists round Pulpit Rock
Its granite ledges wreath and mock,
Till wafting breezes them beguile
To drift o'er Grohman's deep defile.

Nasookin's whistle full and deep
The timid echoes wakes from sleep;
I hear them flee in soft alarm
And mellowing cadence up the Arm.

Eve spreads her robe of sombre brown;
With touch like magic, lo, the Town,
Far up her tree-clad slopes unroll'd,
Glitters in spangled cloth of gold.

A thousand homes those trees conceal,
One that, seft-taught by love and zeal,
These hands upreared, around whose hearth
Dwells all that most I love on earth.

Dark wood with shadowed river blends,
Save where the gloom yon headlight rends,
As round each boulder-buttressed scar
The train winds up from Castlegar.

In distance hid a purring launch
Hies homeward to the fruitful ranch,
Perhaps yon point of light his gale
That twinkles from the farther side.

Darkling I hear in some far glade
A tinkling, twilight's serenade;
And, under all, the mellow note
From Cottonwood's deep canyon throat.

O loveliest scene! What thoughts are mine,
Through memory as thy beauties shine.
What joys come down the drifting years,
What grief that thee no less endears.

Still shed on me thy tenderest ray,
Thou Star of Glorious Kootenay,
For though in exile far I roam,
'Tis sadly sweet to call thee home.

GENEVIEVE

A CROSS these hills as once I strayed,
Bereft of all I loved, to grieve,
Each shifting shadow as it played
New cause of tears and longing made,
Such heaviness upon me weighed,
Genevieve.

Oppressed with sorrow like my own
Their voiceless bosoms seemed to heave;
The chill west wind made plaintive moan
To every dumb far-wandered stone—
I was far-wandered and alone,
Genevieve.

Love called, but there was none to hear.
Oh, who could know, or who conceive
How empty seemed the world of cheer,
How lonely, profitless and drear—
Until you came and found me here,
Genevieve.

Then on the land a wonder fell,
As if some sorcerer did achieve
O'er cloud and shade a magic spell.
By what high power doth love dispel
The hosts of darkness? Canst thou tell,
Genevieve?

O happy hills; where oft I climb
In recollection to retrieve
Those happy hours as in their prime.
Even now I charge my feeble rhyme
To bring again both scene and time,
Genevieve.

Once more I tread our winter trail—
The storm wind blows as if 'twould reave
The poplar boughs; snow flies like hail,
But in your cheek, so lately pale,
The roses bloom to flout the gale,
Genevieve.

We've watched the fettered lakes unbound,
The spring its magic carpet weave;
Our pulses quickened at the sound
Of robins trilling; when we found
Red roses, then was pleasure crowned,
Genevieve.

Again, as once in merry mood,
The stones we pile, the wood we cleave,
And o'er the flames prepare our food,
Just thou, and I and she so good,
That happy day in Castlewood,
Genevieve.

With sunset fire yon hill-top glows
Whereon we rested to relieve
Hot feet; there watched the strident crows
Wheel round the owl, at whose sad pose
We laughed; and I, "Dost think he knows,
Genevieve?"

Beneath this hill whereon I stand,
Far spreading in the golden eve
I see the fields where, hand in hand,
We wandered, while the breezes fanned
Your cheek, and summer set her brand,
Genevieve.

I love the meadow, primrose strown
Where, listening still, I nigh believe
The words you spoke in days long flown
Like seeds of summer flowers have grown;
And whisper new your voice and tone,
Genevieve.

But most the path by yonder lake
Where drooping willows interweave.
There oft at eve my way I take,
And kneeling low new vows I make
In Heaven's high cause for Love's sweet sake,
Genevieve.

Love still denies that love is vain,
That hearts are false, that lips deceive,
That Faith no answering faith may gain,
Nor soul in soul full trust attain—
Leave to the doubter his disdain,
Genevieve.

Life's full-blown joys for me are passed,
And God's decrees scant margin leave
To turn and glean what I have cast
As worthless by. The years fly fast,
But, lo, the Wine of Friendship last,
Genevieve.

I seize, I quaff the golden bowl,
And in its ecstasy perceive
The Love of God who views as whole
The good and error of my soul,
And walks with me in Friendship's rôle,
Genevieve.

The Wine! It flows in every vein!
In quickened pulse I feel reprieve
Of Hope's surcease. Oh, yet again
With thee I set across the plain
The highest hill-top to attain,
Genevieve.

With thee! O, canst thou ever lend
To me, forlornest son of Eve,
Adown the devious way I wend,
How rough soe'er, how far the end,
The magic token—"Thee to Friend,"
Genevieve?

THE LITTLE SWISS CLOCK

OUT in the country I've a friend,
Truer one God doth seldom send.
Her white hands point the steps of youth
The way to walk in the path of truth.

Up on my wall I've a little Swiss clock—
All day long it swings—tick, tock.
Its white hands point to the passing hours,
And keep me working with all my powers.

I asked my friend to come to town
And work with me, but she turned me down;
I felt so sad that I almost cried,
And fled to my room my grief to hide.

Perhaps I was silly, but that's my way.
When you're sad like that there's nothing to say.
And my little Swiss clock, as if it knew,
Had run right down and was silent too.

Brave little friend, whom I love so dearly,
The dear little clock that swings so cheerly
Is silent still, its sympathy showing,
Till you shall come and set it going.

SONG

I STAND by the lake, Beloved,
When the eve is calm and still,
And I watch and watch aweary
For your coming o'er the hill.

The terns that wheel above me,
And the curlews on the strand,
O they heed not me, Beloved,
Waiting silent on the sand,
Waiting silent in the pathway,
Just to see you wave your hand.

I know you are sometime coming,
And I know the way you'll take,
For your form above the hill-top
I'll see mirrored in the lake.
Then the terns will higher circle,
And the curlews leave the strand,
When I run in haste, Beloved,
Where I see you wave your hand,
Just to hear your voice, Beloved,
And to take you by the hand.

YOU WILL RETURN AGAIN

LEAGUES endless, river-furrowed, lake-begemmed,
And languid herds, and shadowing field of grain,
And lily meads, and valleys poplar-stemmed;
Far vistas by the dim horizon hemmed—
But you have crossed the plain.

Rude icy-shouldered peaks that rear their heads
Above the clouds in puny man's disdain;
Fierce torrents fretting in their narrow beds;
Dark woods where many a savage terror treads—
But these were all in vain.

Dread Sea, that murmurs in its ancient caves
Its tales of ships betrayed and heroes slain;
Wild wind that over cliff and islet raves,
And treacherous lanes, and all-engulfing waves—
But you have crossed the main.

Wide plain, bold mountains and broad heaving sea,
Deep sea, dark mountains, and familiar plain:
I fear them not, for you have promised me,
Someday, across the vastness of the three
You will return again.

CHRISTMAS MORNING

THE hands are empty but the heart is full.
No gift were rich enough that I might bring;
The time-worn formula seems all too dull
And pallid to convey so great a thing.
As I upon thy threshold fain would lay
To tell thee of the things I cannot say.

My thoughts are in confusion, and involve
My heart in sharp rebellion. All thy cheer
Perplexities anew creates to solve,

Entangling pride and gratitude and fear,
And all the glories of this Christmas Day
Are powerless to temper my dismay.

I would not chide the wealth of thy largesse,
Nor bid thee hold the gifts thy hands disperse.
'Tis but that I, a pilgrim in distress,
Should find no compensation but a verse,
And vain it seems to speak of recompense
For present blessings in the future tense.

Of recompense? Ah, no, forgive the thought,
Unworthy raving of a harassed mind;
For such surpassing gifts in friendship brought
Are symbols of a nobler thought behind—
A thought above design, without a peer,
A thought to light with hope the dawning year.

Inspired was he who in a larger hall

Once likened Friendship to a sheltering tree:

Unending peace upon that roof-tree fall

That deigns to share its happiness with me.

May joyful skies protective o'er it bend

Whose door flies open with a "Welcome, Friend".

LYRICS OF NATURE

THE NORTHERN LIGHT

I REACHED my hands
For the Northern Light
As it danced and flickered
One autumn night.

Beams of crimson
And golden bars
Seemed to hang
From the very stars;

Threads of purple
And strands of green,
And I could look far
Far up between;

Rays and ribbons
Of red and gold,
And curtains hanging
In many a fold.

Calm was the night
And sweet and still
As I leaned out
From my window sill;

But up in the sky
Was a wondrous breeze,
For the curtains fluttered
Above the trees.

Banners they seemed
On an azure field;
That waved undaunted
And would not yield.

But then of a sudden
Their folds were gone,
And I saw but the shafts
That they hung upon.

The light shafts sped
In a dazzling dance
Like the glittering spears
Of old knights of France.

By ranks and columns
In rich parade
They wheeled and marched
On a gay crusade.

Up hill and down
They filed away,
Haply the Great
White Bear to slay.

Up and upward
Then wandered where
Great Hercules watches
The Dragon's lair;

Beyond the realm
Where meteors stray,
To the dim white path
Of the Milky Way.

And there as they lingered
They changed once more
To rainbow ripples
On spray-lit shore;

And the rippling ran
In the heavenly breeze
Like fingers a-tremble
On organ keys,

And the music seemed
Like an anthem grand
That none but an angel
Might understand.

With tremor and trill
The melody rose
In swift enchanting
Arpeggios;

Then down it ran
With quiver and flash—
All breathless I waited
The final crash.

But there was no sound,
For it faded away
To a will-o'-the-wisp
In a meadow astray—

A will-o'-the-wisp
In a firefly mead,
Each twinkling white
On the tip of a reed.

I watched and I waited—
The glory was spent,
Not a flicker or glimmer
To say where it went,

And I saw but the stars
And the radiance of these
As it fell through the tops
Of the shadowy trees.

But the Northern Sky
Where the Great White Bear
Prowls after Cassi-
opoeia's Chair.

From that time forth
Forever will be
A region of high
Romance to me.

A POT OF DAFFODILS

FAIR daffodils, when I recall the day
I set a rude bulb in the dull dark earth,
And see the wonder that has come to birth,
Beyond all promise of the sullen clay,
Beyond all art my cunning could essay,
Beyond my fancy's dream—when I behold
Your ivory radiance and your crown of gold,
Against my doubting heart I stern inveigh:

For when within some bosom chill and bare
I sow, how inexpert, the living seeds
Of love's philosophy, need I despair
To see at length a harvest of rich deeds?
In what so barren life, what heart so chill
Shall love not blossom fair as thou, O daffodil?

SPRINGTIME LURE

I CANNOT stick to business
These merry days in May,
When dandelions on the lawn
Are like a carpet gay,
And poplar seeds a-flying
Lead all my thoughts away.

Alas! this dreary business!
Tomorrow will be June,
And every bush is full of song,
And all the songs in tune;
The melodies that burst at dawn
Are flooding still at noon.

I bind my eye to business—
Ah, there's a flash of yellow:
A warbler in the lilac bush,
A most resplendent fellow.
Wide open is the window;
The air is sweet and mellow.

Away! Away with business!
The warbler is my guide.
I'll waste a golden hour
Where I have none to chide,
And cleanse my heart's dark treason
In springtime's balmy tide.

COROT

DIVINELY gifted was thy hand, Corot,
Thy heart, from field and glade, from stream
and tree

The subtle living essence to distil,
Limpid and sweet, wherewith to blend thy tints.
For with what meaner flux could art attain
The sweet similitude of grace and truth
That-like light fingers on a sleeping harp
Wakes in our hearts faint chords of memory
Of moments rare while yet the world was young?

The very peace of eve breathes in thy trees.
The willows bend in reverenc in the hush—
Like Guardian angels o'er the sleeping ponds,
While deep within their quiet bosoms, lo,
Their very souls have slipped and rest in love.
Dawn steals in, silent-footed, and behold,
They slumber still, in misty mantle wrapped.
Then at her summons, lightly on the green
Trip forth the sprightly nymphs, all undismayed
By thy so gentle soul who loved the dawn.

O soul of simple gentleness and love,
Would that we too might learn thy sweet approach
To Nature's heart in self-forgetfulness.
Then might we steep our sorrows in her peace,
And half the pain of life be soothed away.

THROUGH THE MIST

NO fairer sight can be, I think,
Than rugged peaks in half eclipse,
-Veiled at the dawn in pearl and pink
Like some divine apocalypse.

And yet, while scarce the sun has kissed
The peaks, or half the birds awake,
How sweetly, mantled in the mist,
Hill-cradled, lies the slumbering lake.

O well I love the boundless view
Across our sunlit prairie plain,
But softer, lovelier gleams it through
The mist that lingers after rain.

Fair gleam the hills with living gold,
The golden flood of summer days,
But fairer they a hundred fold,
Transfigured in the autumn haze.

O sweet were childhood's hours, I trow,
Though mingled oft with childhood's tears,
But sweeter does the memory grow
When mellowed through the mist of years.

ROSES IN JUNE

R OSES in June! Roses in June!
First of the season's blooming.
What! Is the summer time here so soon.
With roses the eve perfuming?
Ah, how they challenge my blind neglect,
Condemning the musty study
That taught me not how the roses decked
The thickets in gold and ruddy.

Roses in June! Roses in June!
And two fair faces glowing;
Two warm hearts that beat in tune
The roses on be bestowing.
How have I merited gift so fair
Garnish'd with thoughts so kindly?
Into what service with gold so rare
Thus would ye surely bind me?

There is no gold in the heart of a rose
Can match with a maiden's sweetness.
There is no blossom that ever blows
Can charm with the same completeness.
And the gift of your love no wish amends,
Nor know I a richer boon,
For it enters my inmost soul and blends
Like the breath of your roses in June.

Roses in June! Roses in June!

Let us away to wander
Far over meadow and field and dune
Riving the crimson plunder.
Any congenial pals as we—
How better may friends commune
Than down by the river to ramble free,
Gathering roses in June?

OUR SUMMER GUEST

A LITTLE box—
 (a little pains)—
A little roof
 In case it rains;
A door for invitation;
A pretty spot
 Among the trees;
A glint of sun,
 A pulsing breeze;
A lover's dedication.

A little pair
 Of weary wings;
A happy heart;
 A voice that sings
In love's anticipation;
The eager quest
 Of cunning eyes—
A sudden halt
 In high surprise—
A shrewd investigation.

A sideways fit—
 A tilted peep;
Delight! A covert
 Snug and deep—

No more of hesitation;
A mate—a gleaning,
Twig and twine;
A cosy nest
Of quaint design—
A little habitation.

THE COT

THIS is a place in the wood,
Much as God made it;
Charms of its old solitude
Ev'n now pervade it;
We took it just as it stood,
And we have not betrayed it.

Space 'mong the poplars we cleared,
(Praying for pardon);
There as the verdure appeared
Planted a garden—
This little tenement reared,
Our chalet in Arden.

Every wild bird of the wood,
Humble or crested,
Builds in the old neighborhood
Where late she nested;
Rights that long use have made good
Stand unmolested.

Odors of balsam in spring;
Summer's gay laughter;
Thistle-down taking to wing—
Leaves flying after;
Winter clouds hasting to fling
Snow on our rafter:

Here in contentment and cheer
Our circle we rally,
Careless how fleeteth the year—
God keeps our tally.
Time only makes it more dear,
Our woodland chalet.

THE MOURNING CLOAK

WHAT can the last lone butterfly do
That comes to the earth in the late
October?

Deep is the haze where the sun shines through,
And the shimmering hills are brown and sober.

Gone are the flowers,
Wan are the hours,
Bare are the whistling trees,
And the gossamers frail
O'er the landscape sail
Like adventurous argosies.

Over the land he will seek in vain
To slake his thirst in a horn of nectar.
Primrose and aster the frost has slain,
And the thistle-top is a harrowing spectre.
Faded the clover,
May-days are over;
Squirrels have heaped their store,
And the gay romance
Of the butterfly dance
We shall see in the land no more.

Over the fields he may flutter and flit
In quest of a frolicking mate or lover—
Hie thee away to a land more fit
In the blossoming south with the upland plover.

Cows in the meadow
Drowse in the shadow,
Sable and red and roan,
But a mate for thee
There never may be
In the land where the poplars moan.

What shall the last lone butterfly do
When the barren hills of October flout him?
Under the leaves he will hide from view
And gather his purple cloak about him,—
Creep from the noon-light,
Sleep in the moon-light,
Soon will the snow be spread,
And the Winter white
With a coverlet light
Will compassion his lonely bed.

A ROUND OF ARTISTRY

WINTER set his easel bare
In meadow, field and glade;
May hung up her canvas—
There all summer long it stayed.

Lavishly September flung
Her colors all about.
There came a cold October rain
And washed the picture out.



THE ADVENTURE OF LIVING



WHEN I HAVE PASSED

I AM writing a mighty poem
That will ring to the end of time,
But not in pitiful numbers
That limp to a halting rhyme.
I write in the hearts of children
My thoughts of love and cheer,
And they will carol my music
More sweetly from year to year.

I am painting a wondrous picture
In colors of rose and gold,
But not on a crumbling canvas
With pigments that will not hold.
Nay, rather in deeds of kindness
I paint on the hearts of youth;
There men will see in the future
My vision of life and truth.

I am planting a glorious garden—
I never shall plant it more,
For the seeds that fall as they ripen
Its beauty will aye restore.
In the soil of the hearts of young folk
I labor from day to day,
And men will joy in my garden
When I have passed away.

THE LIFE OF A FARMER

THE farmer chirruped his team afield,
And looked to the sky for rain,
Though never a drop did the east wind yield
To quicken his golden grain.
But he scattered the seed and covered it deep.
"It's needful to sow if one ever would reap,
For the rain will come when I am asleep,"
And it's ho, for the faith of the farmer.

The farmer carried his head on high
As he watched his acres grow.
The hail came out of the summer sky
And laid his harvest low.
It beat it black as a field new-plowed,
And the farmer looked on it, heavy-browed,
But never a word did he speak aloud,
And it's oh, for the heart of the farmer.

Into his field the farmer went
For his team at the triple bars,
And as their heads to the bridle bent
He stroked their milk-white stars.
"Come, lads," he said, "there is work to do.
We lose today—we must start anew.
Next year we'll win, if the word is true,"—
And it's ho, for the grit of the farmer.

Into the earth the farmer cast
The seed of a venture new.
Labor lost is a thing of the past,
And fortune for them that sue.
Showers mellowed the fertile mould;
Sunshine covered the fields with gold,
And harvest brought to his forty fold,
And it's ho, for the luck of the farmer.

WISDOM

WISDOM hides in humble places,
Every spot is holy ground;
Happy who her covert traces,
Happy who her haunt has found.
Let the seeker have a care;
He may pass it unaware.

Reckon not to know her surely
By the sparkle of a gem;
Oft her brow serene demurely
Wears no glittering diadem.
Idle were the aid of art;
Wisdom's worth is in her heart.

Wisdom wears the badge of duty;
Only earnest eyes and true
In her face austere find beauty
Fadeless as the heaven's blue.
Seek! Yet seek her not unless
Thou in thralldom acquiesce.

Swear no oath to serve her truly,
Trusting in the days afar
She will recompense thee duly
With bright coronet or star.
Heart must aye with hand accord;
Service is its own reward.

THE GAY DAYS! THE GRAY DAYS!

THE gay days—the gray days,
And all days altogether!—
And my frail heart responding.

Like roses to the weather—
Like timorous half-blown roses
As sun or shade disposes
My faint heart opes and closes,
Forever and again.

Why should I fear the gray days?
They're ring'd about with laughter,
For a gay day went before them,
And another follows after.
What boots it then to borrow
A double load of sorrow,
If there may rise tomorrow
A golden dawn again?

Then welcome be the gray days
That make the gay the sweeter;
And welcome be the gay days
That speed the gray the fleeter.
Though dawn dark clouds be weaving,
No more of idle grieving—
At evening I'm believing
I will be light again.

THE SNAP OF WINTER

THE smell of horses, tang of frost, the wail
And creak of runners on the gripping snow
And I am back full forty years ago,
At daybreak, ready for the woodman's trail.
Twelve northward miles I plough the drifted ruts,
Unhitch and feed among the sheltering trees;
Then, plunging through light snow above the
knees,
Smite the dark poplar stems with gleaming cuts.

The shadows fall reversed. The patient team,
With steaming flanks and frosted front and mane,
Climb the long hill and cross the dreary plain
To where afar the homestead windows gleam.
How swift the dear delights of days long lost
Revive, when I smell horses in the frost.

MOTHER CRAFT

“**B**E WISE—but gentle as a dove,”
Spake One who knew the ways of men;
But who, to mingle craft with love,
Hath Art like Mother, now as then?

She, only, feels the inmost sense
Wherewith the Master's words are rife,
Or knows the fateful consequence
That marks the common stuff of life.

To her there is no common stuff—
The common things are all divine;
And she hath vision clear enough
To use them in her great design.

The beaten path, the daily round
Where pleasure yields its place to toil,
Where backs for burdens must be found,
Or fingers burrow in the soil;

Due honor paid to kindly deed,
A story told, a picture hung,
A helping hand to one in need,
A merry jest, a carol sung;

A phrase that lingers in the mind,
A world of praise, a word of blame,
Their subtle impress leave behind,
And life will never be the same.

A specious falsehood brought to light,
Merit revealed in humble guise,
Pain linked with wrong, content with right—
O thus the Mother Heart is wise.

A thousand acts they seem to be,
Yet compassed in a single thought,
As diverse threads in tapestry
To pictured unity are wrought.

Some day maturer eyes will see
In life's wide fabric interwove
With sweet and patient subtlety
The golden thread of Mother Love.

Some day in finger post and shaft
That mark the road to Paradise
Will years reveal the gentle craft
Wherein the Mother Heart was wise.

THE VOICE OF THE AXE

I TOOK my book and pen to write
A poem that should make my name
Throughout creation, over night,
Win laurels and immortal fame.

Forth fared I, ready to receive
A motive, straight from Nature's heart,
Whence, skilled in numbers, I should weave
A garland worthy of my art.

I passed the open woodshed door
And heard the wood the axe address:
When woodpiles whisper, how they roar—
"Winter is coming."—Axe said; "Yes!"

Was this my fame's idyllic cue?
O, Bathos! Inspiration fled.
Deflated thus, what could I do
But split a pile of wood instead?

THE TRUE CANADIAN

YOU must be born in Canada
Among her lakes and rills,
And open your eyes to the golden light
That floods her thousand hills;
And you must breathe the air of love
That keeps some hearth aglow,
And sleep to the tender lullabies
Canadian mothers know.

You must grow up in Canada
On the meat of her ample store,
And drink the wine of reverence
For her far-gathered lore.
The good and brave, the wise and true
Shall be in song your theme,
And noble deeds to dare and do
Young manhood's rainbow dream.

And you must live in Canada,
Whatever lands may call,
Until her great communal life
Has found your heart in thrall.
And though you own but a humble cot,
Or e'en like a gipsy roam,
Be there joy and pride in the thought for you
That Canada is your home.

And you must think for Canada,
And bring your thoughts to birth,
Whether with voice or pen, or hand
Plunged in the warm rich earth.
In humble or exalted place,
Let but your heart be true,
And the heart of a land for which you thought
Will joy in the thought of you.

A NATION'S GLORY

O CANADA, beware the pride
Of boundless wealth on land and tide;
Vaunt not, how great soe'er it be,
Thy heritage from sea to sea.
Let pride of manhood be thy boast,
And worth the thing thou lovest most.

Though bright auroras flash aloft,
Though winds afar thy story waft,
Though mountains tell, though seas proclaim
Such wealth as none but thou may name,
What boots it if thy people fail
In virtue's pathways to prevail?

O let the people, that uplifts
To Him Who giveth goodly gifts
The voice of prayer, adoring hands,
Be known through envious seas and lands
For honor in her sons who roam
And steadfast righteousness at home.

THE LIGHTS OF LONDON

Refers to London, Ontario.

I SAW the lights of London,
The myriad lights of London,
I saw the lights of London
Like stars y'fallen down.
'Twas summer at its fairest,
And evening at its rarest,
When in the valley glittered
The lights of London Town.

Four thousand miles a-roving
From West to East a-roving,
And home again a-roving
I wandered up and down.
But naught of all I treasure
Renews a deeper pleasure
Than one fair starry vision,
The lights of London Town.

Deep-wrapped in contemplation
I watched the radiation
From street and habitation
Shot o'er the upland brown.

Was it a fancy fleeting,
Like muffled drums retreating,
Or—hearts I heard a-beating?
The hearts of London Town.

Oh, it was hearts a-beating!
I felt it like a greeting,
And hastened to the meeting,
For though of no renown,
An influence that drew me
Came up the valley to me,
Almost as if they knew me
And welcomed me to town.

I WILL BELIEVE

I WILL believe, though life deny my creed,
Though nations war, though Jew and Gentile
clash,

Though class curse class, though 'neath the fiery
lash

Of persecution doomed peoples bleed,
While High Mistrust forbears to intercede—

I will believe the world is mainly good,
That human hearts throb high at human need
With inborn sense of human brotherhood.

How can I else acquit the world of crime,
Black, blasphemous, subversive, if I hold
Not firm the sacred faith, like guarded gold,
That groping darkly through the mists of Time
Man struggles fiercely o'er the blood-soaked sod,
Seeking a dimly-sensed Eternity and God?

THE WORLD DOES NOT DISARM

HOW long, O Lord, with high and sounding
phrase

And specious formula shall men arraign
This monster Mars, who evermore betrays

Their councils into faction's strife and strain?
War-weary hearts o'er all a riven world

Hang on the issue while their patriots plead
That now at last War's banners may be furled
And peace benign his iron sway succeed.

They wait, they plead, yet still the shipyards ring,

The arsenal chimney's belch, the forges glow,
New tyrants from their lands new millions wring

That thus—O ye that reap the fruits of woe,
Is there no power in human charity
To set a term to Time's most hoar barbarity?

REMEMBRANCE DAY

IF I had been to Germany,
And killed a thousand men,
I'm sure I never should have had
A happy day again.

I'd need at least a day a year,
When I was down to zero,
For folk to clap me on the back,
And say, "Oh, what a hero!"

Remembrance Day, it might be called,
But every day would be,
Though other folk might never know,
Remembrance Day for me.

SILENCE

Written in the I.O.D.E. Memorial Cemetery, Regina.

"**T**HEIR name forever liveth!" In this ground
Doth Silence speak more eloquent than
words,

Broken, yet sanctified, by song of birds
Unweening in the whispering trees around.
The brooding sparrow for her nest has found
A place secure within the cannon's throat.
Silent it stands! Silent they lie remote
Whose living courage knew its threat'ning sound.

Perpetual Sabbath reigns. The glist'ning cross
Looks down in benediction. Poppies nod
Before each graven record, scanty clue—
A name, a date, a number—to the loss
Of some life unfulfilled. In foreign sod
The happy lips lie dumb: Shall we be silent,
too?

LAUSANNE

LORD of all lands! In hope and dread
We kneel today before Thy throne;
In supplication bow the head,
For Thou canst aid and Thou alone.

Our sins of waste, of pride and greed
Have wrought us woe and grief and shame,
And all our murmurings only lead
Us on to sins of deeper blame.

Our trampling armies in their wake
Leave desolation, stark despair;
And plundering spoilers throng to take
The windows' and the orphans' share.

The subtle systems we have spun
Have snared our feet in baleful toils;
And every victory craft has won
Our world in deadlier hate embroils.

Now face to face our wise men meet;
Lead them in love to understand,
To build and lay before Thy feet
The goodly world Thy thought has planned.

Lord of all Nations! Hear our prayer,
Lest all their counsels come to naught;
And in Thy grace and might repair
The evil that our sins have wrought.

THE SOUL OF MAN



MY ROSARY

SORROW, said I, be thou my joy,
Since Pleasure brings me pain.
Let not Despair my soul destroy;
Do thou life's bitterness alloy,
And teach me peace again.

Love's sun hath darkened from the sky
Long ere it reach the west;
But shall I then Love's worth deny?
Harden my heart? Curse God and die?
Count life a cruel jest?

My stricken heart forever bleeds
With wounds that will not heal.
But while each faltering year succeeds
The cold clear star of Duty leads—
Ah, whither? God, reveal!

The Past is gone beyond recall,
But Grief has had his day.
Let gentler Sorrow's soothing pall
Across my tortured bosom fall
And hide its wounds away.

O Past, that haunts me like a wraith,
With courage new I scan
The terrors of my onward path,
Since one has touched my brow in faith
And said, Thou art a Man!

How like a benediction psalm
That all my being thrills!
To aching heart what healing balm;
How sweet the comfort and the calm
Its melody distils!

Dear Lord, confirm the simple trust
Those faithful words convey,
And in the path where still I must
Fare on o'er desert shadows and dust,
Inspire me, not betray.

WAVES OF WAKAW

The lake at Wakaw, Saskatchewan, is a charming summer resort.

CURL, cold waves of Wakaw
Round the stones of your beach.
What for a stony heart
Hath your sibilant speech?

What for a heart beset
By Time and the world's mischance?
Hath Life no power supreme
Over Circumstance?

Naught hath your speech to tell
That the heart can follow—
Naught but the voices of the winds,
And the winds are hollow.

Driven they know not how
They wander hither.
Moaning they pass and go
They know not whither.

Only the stones are staunch,
Till soft or louder
The ceaseless waves of Wakaw
Grind them to powder.

PEACE, BE STILL

THESE things the froward heart of man
subdue:

A mother bending o'er a bed of pain;
On winsome cheek a silent tear-drop's stain,
And brimming lids; an old song sung anew;
The fragrance of a garden; childhood's smile;
A flickering hearth with pictures from the past;
A lonely shore; the sea-view grey and vast;
The solemn grandeur of a ruined pile.

Let come what may from out the olden time
Where once he stood by life's unquested sea,
Rapt in the thrill of wondrous things to be,
Ere yet his heart was dark with pride and crime,
These tender emblems of a day long dead
Shall calm his soul and bow his stubborn head.

A MANTLE OF MERCY

WHITE mantled lie the fields beneath the
snow
Light sifted from the deep compassion-
ate sky.

The restless leaves, that drifted to and fro
In dark foreboding, now contented lie;
The faded grass, wind-trampled, dead and dry,
The wanton weeds that bow repentant heads,
And whitening bones that still for vengeance cry
Are hidden where the snow its mantle spreads.

So in my life, now patent in review,
What scars of failure, waste and false desire;
What beauty missed, that now too late I rue!
How shall I, Lord, to peace of soul aspire,
Unless Thou, pardoning my humanity,
Thy mantle spread of mercy over me?

FIDELIS

BY his own hand he sped;
They sought him far and wide,
Three days of gathering dread.
They found his wounded head—
They knew the way he died.

Wayward of will was he;
The warfare in his breast
Confounded utterly
The man that was to be—
He knew nor joy nor rest.

The good that could not win,
Yet scorned its hope to lose,
To thwart the darker sin
Crashed life's fair fortress in,
And let the sweet blood ooze.

O weep! Withhold the scorn
Such baleful horror stirs,
For her whose heart is lorn,
The mother heart, O mourn,
And match thy tears with hers.

They laid him in the mould.
Where pride and failure meet;
Dull-witted tongues condoled,
And idlers gloating told
The tale of his defeat.

But she who bore the shame
A love transcending bore;
Without reproach or blame
She wrote his childish name—
OUR WILLIE—nothing more.

LOVE IS A BIRD

LOVE is a bird with a song,
Not a wasp with a sting.
Scourge me, and though I be wrong,
To my fault will I cling.
Love me, and though it be long,
I will penitence bring.

Sweet is the song of the bird—
I will linger to hear—
Ever the more it is heard
More sweet and more dear.
Mighty and sweet is the word
That love utters clear.

How wilt thou quicken the flow
At the lip of the spring?
Needs there a tempest to blow
For the lark on the wing?
Friend hath no need of a foe,
Nor love of a sting.

Love me with laughter and song
And communion of cheer,
So shall our journey be long
In a love without fear,
For love is a bird with a sway in its song,
And the heart hath an ear.

LOYALTY

THE loyal are the kings and queens of earth
With right supreme to claim their thrones
in heaven:

Strong sons and daughters, of no futile birth,
Whose faults and frailties cry to be forgiven.
Before High God their faults are fully shriven
Who find a truth, then live to prove its worth,
By no wild whim incontinently driven
Or blast of mass emotion that incurr'th.

Alas, when they with fitful vision fail
Whose duty 'tis to stay their leader's hands;
Who see unmov'd the enemy prevail,
Nor shrink to wear foul treason's deadly brands.
He dies, oh, not who falls, his life to yield,
But who, while victory lingers, quits the field.

COURAGE

I BROODED all a golden summer morn
In dire dismay. How could I else but brood
On hopes o'erthrown, how high, how oft
renewed,

On service, given in love, and paid in scorn?
Courage had fallen: All his locks were shorn;
I had no strength to pace another rood;
Dark thoughts into my soul did aye intrude,
And all my life's high purpose fell forsworn.

Then one I met upon whose brow and cheek
Deep-carving Care had graved in rugged line—
A tale of midnight wrestlings half-divine,
And blows, received and given—Words are weak:
It was a *people's* burdens that *he* bore!
In chastened awe I gazed, and felt my load no more.

PILLARS OF REMEMBRANCE

ETERNAL as the hills! I laughed with scorn
When on their rugged sides the tempest
beat,

And soon adown the furrows torrent-torn

Their crumbling fragments rustled to my feet.

"Workman," I cried aloud, "if thy conceit

With long-enduring form thou would'st endow,

Then choose not brass nor marble, nor compete

With yon high peaks that perish even now."

Man sees the records fall that man had made,

Though graved in hardest flint and adamant,

Yet lives he on, in thought and action swayed

By some far seer with wisdom to implant

All that of worth he found in life's dark plan

Where it would live, within the common heart of man.

DEBTOR

WHATE'ER of manhood is in me ye raised
Who ever held me nobler than I was;
Who turned forgiving eyes upon the
flaws,

And what was worthy magnified and praised.

Out of thy love my spirit, oft amazed,

Sore needed strength for living freely draws,

And forward looks with rallied hope because

The path before me beckons that ye blazed.

Be this for long investment thy return,

For coin of love is love's best dividend;

Nor shall it count as usury to earn

An hundred fold the love ye freely spend.

In wanton youth, how slow was I to learn;

In long review, at last I comprehend.

SO LET US LOVE

I LOVE the love that takes no thought of loving,
Whose very heart outflows
Spontaneous, all its inward sweetness proving
Like fragrance in a rose;

That softly comes across life's pain and aching
As dawn across the fields,
With gentle touch the heart to hope awaking
Till every sorrow yields;

That in the fulness of its consecration
Makes other hearts akin—
There is for love no other compensation
Than that which love may win;

That in its loving glasses not some picture
Portrayed in falsest hues,
Nor learns from thoughtless praise or idle stricture
To worship or accuse.

I love the love beyond all reach of treason
Or guile's deceiving spite,
Steadfast in simple faith nor time nor season
Hath power to sway or blight.

I love the love too great for all disaster
To wound or paralyze;
That in vicissitude but binds the faster
Its love-begotten ties;

That in the hour it sees the loved one fallen,
By passion's might betrayed,
Veils not its face, by weak self-pity swollen,
But, strong and undismayed,

Feels in itself a power for life and healing
For one in dire distress,
In full restored companionship revealing
New heights of nobleness.

O grace divine! Essential theme of heaven,
Though in the earth so rare!
How in our sinking souls we need thy leaven
To save us from despair.

